

Sales Clichés to Avoid

33 Phrases that customers hate to hear

I was responding to some posts in a sales and business related blog when I came across a thread that included responses from various business people about phrases that they hate to hear. These phrases include ones they have heard, sometimes over and over again, from sales people they've dealt with. Often times we are unaware that the words we choose and sentences we use may be offensive, abrasive or just plain annoying to people, not to mention meaningless. Hence, I wanted to share these with you so you can look through your inventory of phrases that you use with your clients and see if you might want to make some alterations. If not, that's fine.

However, if you think about some of these phrases and realize that they may be rather annoying, if not empty and useless, then I applaud you for striking them from your repertoire of expressions. With that said, I fully expect to some day use several of these phrases myself since they are embedded in my mind and I just can't help myself. But practice makes perfect. Or is it, perfect practice makes perfect? Either way, I promise to try to eliminate as many of these phrases as possible. I hope you can too. Have fun reading them. Of course, I added my own little parenthetical commentaries after each phrase for your enjoyment.

1. We have the lowest cost of ownership (*What does that REALLY mean? If I paid zero dollars for it, wouldn't THAT be the lowest cost of ownership?*)
2. We provide world-class customer service (*Doesn't everyone claim this? Why not just offer universe-class customer service to beat all your competitors?*)
3. This is cutting edge (*So you're selling knives now?*)
4. 360-degree service (*I get dizzy just thinking about this one.*)
5. Any company that shows me its mission statement has lost me -- especially if it could apply to any other company in the world. (*And they do all sound the same, don't they?*)
6. If you don't act now (*That's the ticket – threaten you customer!*)
7. We are the leader in the _____ industry (*Can you actually prove this?*)
8. We provide out-of-the-box functionality (*But what if your product comes in a bag?*)

9. We develop our product/software with your business objectives in mind (*Sure, but most sales people don't even know what my business objectives are in the first place!*)
10. Value-added (*I don't have a problem with this one, except when it is over used or when the sales rep doesn't really present any value to begin with. Then it is meaningless.*)
11. Core competencies (*Which leaves the non-core items incompetent?*)
12. Blue-sky thinking (*Sure, I always have trouble thinking when the sky is cloud covered.*)
13. Manage expectations (*Are my expectations being unruly and need to be managed?*)
14. Push back (*Sounds too physical for my taste.*)
15. Win-win (*This is something you should strive for when negotiating, but it doesn't need to be said. Otherwise, you sound repetitively redundant.*)
16. Limited time offer (*And when the time is up, you, the Customer, are no longer important to us.*)
17. Our products have QUALITY (*Yes, you and 1000 of your competitors. This is something that's assumed. If you don't have quality products, you shouldn't even be showing up.*)
18. Reporting capabilities unlike any other in our class (*Just what class are you in?*)
19. But wait! There's more! (*This guy should be selling Ginsu knives on an infomercial.*)
20. We have over X combined years of experience in Y (*To me, this means that you either have too many employees or your employees are too old. Useless either way!*)
21. Incentivize when you mean incent, incite or motivate (*This word doesn't even pass my spell checker.*)
22. We empower our employees (*Usually this means that the employees have all the responsibility, but none of the authority. Hence they get all the blame.*)
23. We want to be your partner, not just your provider (*Again, this is something you strive for, but shouldn't have to say. You develop a relationship which evolves into a partnership. To actually say this is being somewhat presumptuous.*)
24. Exceed expectations (*This is fine as long as you first MEET my expectations.*)

25. We are Six Sigma certified (*The average person may think this means you are a star in a Kung Fu movie.*)
26. Web 2.0 (*This "concept" is too new to be used in sales meetings. Perhaps it's just a little ahead of its time.*)
27. We help you increase operational efficiency (*As opposed to completely screwing it up.*)
28. Implications that the solution can be completed and running in a day, an hour, 10 minutes, a microsecond (*Yeah, let's be realistic here!*)
29. Free, Perfect, Always and/or Never (*Words that are strong and definitive, but not always delivered or believable.*)
30. I'm so happy that we can give you... (*Glad YOU are happy, but what about the customer's emotional state?*)
31. The net-net is... (*Another repetitively redundant statement. How about a simple "What this means to you is..."?*)
32. Utilize (*A simple "use" will do, thank you.*)
33. Best practices (*Everyone refers to them, yet no one seems to know what they really are. Except me, of course.*)

If you have any of your favorites that haven't been listed here, please send them to me. I'd love to do a follow-up article with more of these fun tidbits.

Good luck and good selling!

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