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# Asking A Prospect To Buy Is How You Make The Sale

by BILL BROOKS



What happens when you fail to ask someone to buy your product or service? The short version is that you don't get the sale. The longer version is that they buy from someone else, don't buy at all or defer their decision. In any of these cases, you have failed in your role as a salesperson. After all, aren't you paid to make sales?

One of the most intriguing and elusive sales questions of all time is simply this: Why do salespeople spend a great deal of time, effort, energy and commitment to get in front of a prospect only to let the opportunity to sell their product or service slip away from them?

Why does that happen? Is it a sense of caution that is driven by a desire not to offend — or to avoid being offended yourself when your prospect says “No?” Is it an inability to create such value in the mind of the prospect that the salesperson never really knows when, precisely, to ask someone to make a purchase decision? Could it be a simple lack of knowledge when it comes to knowing precisely how to ask someone to buy?

It's probably a little bit of all of these things. The truth is that the answer is not an easy one. Some of the real causes are a lack of:

- Results orientation on the part of the salesperson.

- Assertiveness on the part of the salesperson.
- Sales skills on the part of the salesperson.
- Confidence or self-worth on the part of the salesperson.
- Belief in a product or service on the part of the salesperson.
- A sales process that leads to the sale on the part of the salesperson.

There are probably a lot of other reasons too. But the real fact is this: whenever a sale is not made, it is generally the fault of the salesperson. So stop blaming poor marketing, pricing, product management, sales management, geography or territory, product failures or everything else for your own failure. It's you, not them, who has failed.

That being said, how do you fix the problem? Let me provide some specific ideas or strategies to help you begin finalizing transactions immediately:

- Understand what your real job is. It is not public relations, customer service, technical support

or anything else. It is making sales. Period.

- Learn how to use feedback questions (“how does this look?”) to be sure you're on target with your presentations.
- Learn how to listen and observe better. Listen to what prospects say. Better yet, listen to what they really mean. Be sensitive to non-verbal behavior.
- Master the art of value-added selling so you can provide your product or service in a way that makes it virtually irresistible.
- Be sure you're in front of qualified buyers who really do have the authority to say yes.
- Believe in yourself, your sales process, organization and product or service so much that you badly want others to become a part of it — and ask them to do so.
- Learn, apply and master no more than two well-applied, non-heavy handed ways to finalize a transaction and use them consistently.
- Learn the fundamentals of

negotiation and learn how to ask people to buy after agreeing on terms.

If you are a straight-commission salesperson, your lack of bringing sales to closure can lead to lots of things, including a lack of income and all the bad things that that can create. If you are a salary-based salesperson, it eventually leads to plateaued income, failure to progress in your career and a tiny, quiet voice that says to you "you're not really selling — who are you kidding?"

The bottom line is this. A failure to ask for the order on the part of salespeople is like an athletic team that loses every game in the final seconds. Or a bus driver who never reaches the final destination, or a hair stylist who only cuts half the hair, or a fast food server

who gives you the bun with no hamburger! The job is only half done and never completed to the point that it even comes close to accomplishing the intent of entire activity.

I am struck by another strong analogy. We recently tried to have some custom software designed for our company. The well-intentioned programmer who designed it kept telling me "we're 90% done," then it was "95% done," then "99% completed." He never completed it. I sent him away with this statement, "Whether it is 1% or 99% done, I can't use it unless it's 100% completed." That's true for software — it either works or it doesn't. The same is true for a sale. You either make it or you don't. Even if it's 99% done, it's of no value unless it's 100% sold.

Think about it. □



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