
Overcoming Customers' Objections

by DANIEL ADAMS

Handling objections effectively is often the hardest thing a salesperson will have to do. What they often don't realize is that an objecting customer is a good thing — it means the customer is interested enough in his solution to talk about it. An objecting customer is handing something to you on a silver platter, an opportunity for a “precious moment,” a chance to differentiate yourself as a sales superstar. In order to gain the customer's trust and to proceed hand-in-hand toward a win-win solution, the salesperson needs to be prepared to “vaporize” any objections. Here are some simple steps to vaporizing any customer objection.

Anticipate

Step one in handling any objection is to ensure that you are not surprised, and therefore, perhaps defensive. Work with your marketing department or find a veteran rep that can help determine the top five objections you may be facing. Research! Put yourself in your customer's shoes and ask what might be undesirable about the proposed solution. Role-play

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until you are very comfortable addressing each objection. Even the most complex and technical products and solutions end up having only a handful of key objections.

Confirm the Issue

You need to thoroughly understand your customer's articulated issue. Let's say your customer gives you the standard “your price is too high” objection. If you are an “average rep,” you sprint back to your manager and request an additional 10 points of discount. Your manager is already at his discount limit, so he must call corporate headquarters to obtain permission for the deep discount. After receiving a “yes” from the CEO, your manager calls you at home with the great news. The next morning, you dart into your customer's office to excitedly announce “I got the additional discount you requested on the equipment. When can we get the purchase order?” The customer smiles and says, “Thank you very much for that, but I was referring to your maintenance and support cost being out of line. While I appreciate your help on the equipment side, what can you do for me on the maintenance and support?”

Ouch!

Why did this scenario occur? It is simply because you failed to clarify the customer's objection. When the price objection is raised, a superstar rep will ask, “Our price is too high? Compared to what?” Or, “Can you explain that?” Question your customer fully. Ask for their help in understanding every aspect of the objection.

Credibility Preface

When a customer presents an objection, you have two options: protest and tell them they are wrong, or use the circumstance to gain credibility. By arguing the objection, you put the customer in the position of having to defend their stance.

The other option is to simply step out of the way. A credibility preface allows you to prevent a confrontation with the customer. The simplest credibility preface to use with most objections is to say, "I can understand why you'd feel that way. I would also feel that way, if I were you."

Simply agreeing that a customer has a right to make an objection helps to diffuse the customer's discomfort and opens an air of trust between you and the customer.

After acknowledging your customer's position, ask yourself whether the customer is misinformed or correct. If he is indeed misinformed, you can gently correct him with unbiased proof of your position. Be delicate — correcting a customer is risky business, and you should do so only if you believe he can see the error.

Confirm the Underlying Need

This is your most important step. You must uncover the underlying need that is causing the customer's objection. Let's say you are selling cars. Your potential buyer walks in and says, "I don't like that car. It doesn't have enough horsepower." You provide a credibility preface by responding, "It is true that there are cars out there with more horsepower than this one."

Then you seek the underlying need by asking, "Can you tell me why horsepower is so important to you?" He says, "I need to accelerate quickly for passing on the highway." Now you can respond: "So what you are really looking for is speed and responsiveness." In other words, you have identified his real need as performance.

Apply the Vaporizer Matrix™

Now that you have uncovered your client's underlying needs, you are in a position to use the Vaporizer Matrix™. This matrix integrates your

customer's high-level needs with your company's advantages, allowing you to immediately address your customer's stated needs.

There are typically six high-level needs for most business-to-business purchases:

- Performance — Quality
- Ease of Use
- Reliability — Service
- Futures — Upgradeability
- ROI /TCO (Return on Investment/Total Cost of Ownership)
- Risk

Now to use your vaporizer, simply locate the area that is important to your customer and begin to share with them your advantages that are related to his key need. "Mr. Customer, if performance is a priority for you, let me highlight just a few of our advantages which are exclusive to our offering. We provide something called Turbo Boost. Even though this car doesn't have as much horsepower as that other one, its Turbo Boost accelerates the car from 0 to 60 in 6 seconds!"

If you fail to meet all of the customer's needs with your unique performance, you may now use the advantages highlighted under the other columns. For example, you will now stress your trade-in value and large market share, in addition to the performance offered by your automobile.

Confirm

Make certain you have persuaded your customer to his satisfaction. Confirm that you have addressed his concern by simply asking, "Have I been able to address your needs to your satisfaction?" If not, then you will discover another aspect of the objection, which you can discuss. If you have satisfied the objection, you have achieved a significant accomplishment.

You have made the customer feel that you care to and are able to thoroughly respond to his worries. In other words, you have earned his trust.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

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By the Way...

Now that you have succeeded in meeting your customer's objection, you can segue into other matters, bringing you closer to your sale. An effective way to move on to the next issue at hand is to simply use the transition statement: "By the way, have we discussed your delivery requirements for this car?"

By following these steps, handling a customer's objections will become an opportunity instead of a problem. These concrete suggestions will have you well on your way to superstardom in your sales career! Good luck to you, and remember, "Close 'em!" □

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