

"How to Easily Handle Sales Resistance and Objections (WITHOUT Using Uncomfortable and Goofy Rebuttals)"

(Transcript of webinar presentation. We apologize for any funky formatting or typos)

Hi, and welcome, I'm Art Sobczak. In this webinar, we are going to focus solely on objections and resistance in the sales process, and how you can address them successfully without using goofy sounding rebuttals or sounding like a jerk.

A couple of quick answers to questions:

Yes, you are getting a recording of this program, which you will likely want to go through a few times because I will speak quickly and cover lots of word for word techniques.

Yes, you will get a written transcript, or the electronic PDF of it actually, so you can see the many examples and just copy them.

Regarding questions, I did get a bunch by email, and I am covering the answers all throughout the program. Because I kept adding material, and want to respect your time, if your question is not answered, please email it to me and I will answer it personally, send to smartcalling@gmail.com. And, I'll also likely share it in our Smart Calling Facebook community so everyone can get the benefit from it.

There has been a lot of nonsense taught over the years about sales. Much of it has to do with objections and how to deal with them. Here is some of the garbage you might have heard.

"The selling doesn't start until an objection has been voiced."

"You should love objections."

"After the third objection is when you'll usually get the sale."

Whenever I hear garbage like that I just shake my head. What's scary is that there are people who actually believe some of that nonsense. If the selling didn't start until you heard an objection, what were you doing up until that point? Why not just start out the call with, "OK, what's your objection to buying from me. Come on, let me hear it." Yeah, right.

Love objections? If I love something, I want more of it. As for objections, I'd prefer I never hear another one, since they really are a sign that something broke down in the sales process up to this point. No objections would mean perfection. We'll never reach it, but we should always try to get closer to it than the alternative. Actually, want to know the best way to deal with objections?

Prevent them from coming up in the first place. Most objections are CREATED by salespeople who talk too much. Think about it, if you did not mention something that they did not want, you would not hear an objection, would you? So, the most important point is, focus on asking questions before you present, and you will minimize objections.

OK, but the reality is that we're always going to be faced with resistance. How you deal with it determines your success, and the height of your attitude. Many sales reps either give up upon the first sign of resistance, or they react adversarially, putting on the gloves to defend their own position. Neither is a good strategy.

If you give up, you potentially are missing an opportunity that still might be present, but there is a problem that needs to be addressed. But we need to address it professionally.

The problem with lots of conventional sales training on objections is that it focuses on responding to an objection with a canned answer. There are a couple of serious flaws in this approach.

First, when you hear an objection, you are not hearing the problem, you are hearing a symptom. For any objection, there could be five or ten possible reasons for someone voicing that objection. If you come back with one answer, it's likely you are not addressing their real concern. It's like if you went to the doctor with a headache, and he immediately prescribed brain surgery! That probably would not be treating the real problem!

The other flaw with using a canned answer is that it is simply telling someone that they are wrong. One thing that I learned from years of playing baseball and then coaching my kids boys baseball and girls softball teams--which is common sense but not usually practiced by most people--is that umpires don't like to be told they're wrong. Tell an umpire that a pitch was a strike when he or she called it a ball, and they don't say, "You know, you're right. Thanks for that. I'll change the call."

Or tell them, with passion, that they just blew the call at first base, and they might appreciate your opinion so much that they sometimes insist you leave the field.

Makes sense, doesn't it. When was the last time someone thanked you for telling them they were flat out wrong? It doesn't happen.

Even though everyone resents being told they're wrong— often getting defensive— most sales training suggests sales reps do exactly that: counter objections and resistance with slick, canned phrases, with insidious names like the "Boomerang Technique," which inherently tells people they're wrong and makes them feel just slightly lower than topsoil.

I was in line at the local Barnes & Noble with several books. The counterguy started to process the transaction and asked the question I heard him pose to the three people I watched check out in front of me.

"Do you have one of our discount cards?"

"No," I replied.

This is a card that they sell for \$25 annually that gives you 10 off purchases. Being the math wizard

that I am, I calculated that just the breakeven on the card is \$250 worth of purchases yearly. I might already spend that amount at B&N, but I also buy a ton from Amazon, and on my Kindle, and whatever airport bookstore I wander into, so I had already decided I wasn't going to get one.

And, I was in a hurry, plus there were plenty of people behind me I didn't want to hold up.

"Would you like to get one?"

"No, I'll pass, thanks."

Then he used it: What I call the Goofy Objection Rebuttal Technique.

"Don't you like to save money?"

My first, unspoken reaction was to say, "And don't you want me to reach across this counter and smack you in the head?"

Instead, I just smiled and asked him to ring up the books.

Then, as he was bagging up the purchase he added, "You know, it's a good deal if you buy a lot."

At least he was persistent. I told him I was capable of doing the math.

KEY POINT: You'll never change anyone's mind by preaching at them.

For example, think about beliefs you feel strongly about: something political, moral, or even a favorite sports team. If someone simply started refuting everything you believed in, you would likely strengthen your stance, and think of why the other person is wrong. You can, however, help someone to first doubt their beliefs, which is the initial hurdle in opening them up to your ideas. Get them to question their position regarding your offer or ideas. People believe their ideas more than they do yours. You can't tell them they're wrong and expect success, but you can help them to doubt their perceptions, which causes them to lower their guard and at least be open to what you have to say. You do this with doubt-creating questions.

Ok, then, what should we do, and what will we do on this webinar . First, we will go through a process for identifying the reasons behind the objections you may hear, and then how to create doubt in the mind of the objector so that they can perhaps see your side of the story. Later, we'll look at other forms of resistance that you might hear, which is Let me think about it, and We don't need that. Finally, I'll end with some resistance and objections tips that you can use.

Right now we are going to go through a process that I suggest you follow for all of the common objections you hear. This process will provide you with ways to first understand the reasons behind the objections you hear, and then you will develop questions designed to help them DOUBT their beliefs, which is the initial hurdle in opening them up to your ideas. Then you will anticipate the possible answers you might hear in response to your questions, and you will continue the process. It will be as if you are role-playing the possible scenarios you might run into so that you will be prepared for them.

When I do my in-person training sessions we do this as a workshop activity where I give you time to actually write out your responses in each of these areas, and it takes some time... of course time we don't have right now. So I'm going to present the process to you, please do take notes on it, and then I suggest you do it either alone, or as part of your sales team to collaborate. Don't worry if you don't get everything since you will get the replay of this shortly, as well as the transcript as soon as it's done.

The first step is pretty simple.

1. Write Out a Common Objection.

I'm talking about something you might hear deep into the sales process.

2. List possible reasons people might have for that objection.

We want to understand why you hear those objections As part of that process, I like to think about 'Why would someone say this? Where are they coming from?' It could be a symptom of their lack of complete and accurate information. They just don't have enough information about you or what you're presenting, therefore they object. Maybe they misunderstand what you presented. They just didn't get it. Maybe it's an emotional stance that could be illogical. For example, let's say you're clearly the better choice, but they say, "Well, you know what, I want to deal with somebody local. I know that it cost more, but I just want to deal with somebody local. I want to keep the money here." That clearly could be illogical, but could be very real to them. We can deal with that. Could be your misunderstanding of what they really want. This happens in cases where sales people don't ask enough questions. They present something, it's not on target, they object. Or finally it could be a genuine problem they have with buying from you. This could be a case where it's just not a fit right now. Okay. We're not going to get that one if it's just not a fit. Some of the other ones we might be able to deal with.

Here's one you might get... when they say "Your price is too high," does that mean they can get it cheaper down the street? Or, did they have a predetermined price figure in mind? Or, do they not have enough money in the budget? You'll need to know their rationale (their problem) before you can address the symptom: the objection.

When I still sold physical audio CD's, I had a guy send me an email, and he said, "\$300 for a set of CD's. That's too much money. I went to a Convention and their sales CD's aren't priced that much." So I thought, 'Well, clearly we're not comparing apples to apples there.' So I was kind of in a playful mood. So I called him back. I said, "Oh, if you just wanted CD's, I can get you some at Best Buy. They're really cheap." Then I went on and we talked a little bit about the content.

They had a predetermined price figure in mind. They thought well this is what it should cost. I think they should cost as much as this. Okay. So now we start figuring out our strategy and our tactics here. What are we going to do when we hear these things? We're thinking of questions. We're thinking of answers. We're role playing it in our mind. So when I hear this where am I going to go next?

3. Develop Questions that Create Doubt

Next we want them to question their position regarding your offer or ideas and their problem. People believe their ideas more than they do yours. You can't tell them they're wrong and expect success, but you can help them to doubt their perceptions, which causes them to lower their guard and at least be open to what you have to say.

Consider this: in order for someone to change their mind (including you) people need to go through a process where they first have to look at their belief and say,

"Well, maybe there is another way to look at it." Then they begin softening their position to a point where they might consider other options.

You can do all of this with doubt-creating questions. Here's how.

For each of the objection reasons, write out questions that uncover their rationale, and plants seeds of doubt. For example, for the "price is too high," questions could be,

"Are we talking about just the price itself, or the long-term value?"

"What are we being compared to?"

"What price figure did you feel would be appropriate for what you're looking to receive?"

"Take price out of the picture for a moment; do you like this unit better than any other you've seen?"

One of my all-time favorite ways to get someone talking is to simply act a bit confused and say, "Could you explain that for me?"

Let's look at a specific situation, a wholesale supplier trying to persuade a retailer to carry his product.

The retail customer says, "We don't need to stock any more lines." Of course the wrong response would be a canned "objection rebuttal," coming back with market share facts and figures that would prove the retailer wrong—but not change his mind. A doubt-creating approach would use questions:

"How often in the past month have people called and asked for this type of product and you're not able to provide it?", or,

"What situations have you had where someone called and asked about a product like this, but they didn't come in because they found out you didn't have it?"

4. Anticipate Their Possible Answers, and Your Next Questions

The next step in the process can take some time, but it is well worth it, since it prepares you to deal with whatever might be thrown at you. And that is taking the questions you just developed, and anticipating their possible responses, and then developing your next response, and then continuing the process. As you might imagine, this can get rather involved, and look like a computer programmer's flow chart.

So, right now, I'd like you to stop the program again, anticipate the answers to the questions you created earlier, create your next questions, and continue. You might need several sheets of paper. Please take your time and put lots of thought into it.

OK, you have now created lots of questions, and responses. The final step will be for you to study these, and ideally, role play them with a partner so that you will be smooth when you hear.

To review what we've done,

1. Write out a common objection.
2. List possible reasons people might have for that objection.
3. Develop Questions that Create Doubt
4. Anticipate Their Possible Answers, and Your Next Questions

When you do this exercise, it helps you to prepare for and address objections in a non-adversarial way, and ask questions to root out the reasons, to plant the seeds of doubt in their mind, opening them up to considering your ideas, therefore softening their resistance, and hopefully, ultimately seeing your point of view.

The Objection Handling Process

Allright, so right now I will go a simple process for using those doubt-creating questions. And I'll share through a number of how-to tips and phrases you can use in dealing with resistance and objections in a variety of situations.

The first step after hearing an objection is using a Softening Statement. After hearing an objection, you don't want to give the impression that you are going to argue with them. Therefore it's good to let them know that you are going to be conversational with them.

For example, after hearing an objection you could say,

"I see."

"I understand."

"Not a problem."

"Let's talk about that."

"Let's discuss that . . ."

"That's an interesting point. Let me get a good understanding of it ..."

"Tell me more about that . . ."

"I'm pretty sure I can answer that. Let's go through some of the reasons behind it."

"Let's address that question."

"Ok, I can see that."

This erases any tension that might be present and puts them in a frame of mind where they are more open to answering your questions.

This is actually so simple a fourth grader could do. I know that as a fact. Because one did with me.

I attended a fund-raising dinner as part of a celebrity golf tournament for Arizona youth baseball. Got to meet a few Hall of Fame Major League baseball players—very cool.

During the dinner, kids were working the crowd selling raffle tickets. I had already purchased five \$20 tickets earlier at the door, and a fourth grader (as I later found out) approached our table and very confidently asked, "Would you like to buy some raffle tickets?"

I smiled and told her I already had bought mine. I was impressed that these kids were approaching adults and asking for money (although I'm sure they do it to their parents all the time), so I tried to be as gentle as possible in saying no: "Oh, no thanks. I already bought some."

She looked at me with these beautiful blue eyes, smiled, and in a soft tone replied:

"That's okay."

I didn't know what to say. She totally disarmed me.

"You didn't get any from me yet."

I had nothing! Brilliant! Of course I had to buy more. That's a great example of someone not being deterred by an initial no, and in fact being prepared for it, and then asking again.

I actually had no good reason for not buying another one—it was a fund-raising event, after all.

Isolating the Real Objection

In most cases it's wise for you to narrow their reason for objecting to one issue. After the softening statements we just went through, you could use phrases and questions such as these:

"Let's take that out of the picture. Would we be the ones you'd choose?"

"Let's look at this a different way. Looking at us compared to the others, what would you say would be the more comprehensive choice for you?"

"If you didn't use that as one of your criteria, would we be the ones you'd choose?"

"If we completely took that out of the discussion, then where would we be?"

"Can we narrow your reason for not choosing us to this one issue?"

"Other than that, is there any other issue that's holding you back?"

"If I understand what you're saying, if it weren't for this, you'd move forward, is that right?"

"Let's be sure we're talking about the same issue here. You'd get our program, it's just _____ that's holding you back, is that right?"

The next step is where you actually use the doubt-creating questions we just covered. I wish I had a magic phrase or line or secret sauce you could use and objections would just vaporize, but it doesn't exist.

So again you will ask your questions here, designed to get them thinking about, and doubting their reasons for objecting.

Ultimately you want them thinking, hmmm, well, maybe there is another way to look at it.

Next, this is pretty powerful, it's the concept of a a micro-commitment. We now have softened and broken down their resistance. We want to do one more thing before we go into you restating your case as to why they should move forward.

This is simply asking them, "Are you open to an idea."

Boom. This is almost hypnotic.

It's an easy question for them to answer.

Notice the key words.

Open. Again, given the context of where you are, most reasonable people would at least be open, right.

And you are asking about an idea. Ideas are non-threatening. They don't cost money.

And, once they say yes, they are now invested in listening to what you have.

OK, and then, the next step is to make your Recommendation again, and ask for commitment.

For example,

"So Mike, based on the math we just did here, it looks like your total cost of ownership would be less with our system, since you feel it will give you a greater return over the longer life of unit, and you won't have the out of pocket maintenance expenses. Given all of that, let's go ahead and move forward with it."

Again, what's important here is that if you just made that statement before going through the doubt-creation process, technically you could be totally right, factually, but they might not be there yet emotionally, therefore they likely wouldn't buy into the argument. They'd still be in resistant mode.

Alright, now I'm going to give you a number of tips that you can use with this process.

Give Choices in Response to Resistance

One of the themes of this entire program is that the only way to professionally answer objections is to get the other person talking about the reasons behind the resistance. Another effective way is to offer them choices of reasons and listen to how they respond. For example,

Prospect: "We're happy with our present supplier."

"I see. Is it that you're locked in to a contract, or that you've not found a better value yet?" Or,

"Is it the quality you're getting there, or the service that you like best?"

Prospect: "We're not ready to do anything yet?"

"Is it because there's something that needs to happen before you buy, or that you don't see enough value in acting right away?"

Prospect: "We can get it cheaper elsewhere."

"Hmm. Is price your main concern, or are you looking at service factors also?"

Giving them choices allows them an easy way to voice their concerns. Even if they don't pick one of your alternatives, they will likely answer with something of substance to deal with.

An Alternative to "Why?"

Some sales training suggests you respond with the word "Why?" when you hear some resistance. This is often a touchy situation, since often "Why" is a threatening word. It can imply they are wrong, and attempts to force them to justify their reasoning. What we should do in the sales process when we're looking for the reasons behind a prospect's/customer's opinions and actions is to coax out their beliefs in a nonthreatening, conversational manner, avoiding the word "why."

For example,

Prospect: "I don't think your system would work for us?"

Instead of "Why not?", consider,

"I see. What were some of the factors considered in reaching that conclusion?"

Or, "What led to that decision?"

Here's another,

Prospect: "We can't do anything about new machines until next year."

Instead of,

"Why?", try,

"What is it about next year that will make that a better time for you?"

Think of excuses and resistance you commonly encounter, and brainstorm for non-threatening questions that will help unlock the real reasons behind the words. Try to focus on the decision and the activity, not the person.

Let's talk about handling early resistance on your calls.

What I'll talk about right now are not real objections, but nevertheless cause calls to end quickly. It's early resistance on prospecting calls. Even if you do everything I teach in my Smart Calling process, point-by-point perfectly, you will still get people who respond with some variation of "I'm not interested" or "We're happy with what we're doing."

Expect it. Don't be deterred by it. And prepare for it. That's what I'll show you right now.

Resistance after hearing an opening statement from an unknown caller is a natural, conditioned reaction for many people. And it usually works in attempts to blow sales reps off the phone. Except you, of course, because you'll have some conversational ways to get the prospect talking, which really is the key to keeping the call alive and creating an opportunity.

I have a name for these kinds of inherent reactions that sales calls tend to elicit from prospects: Resistant Reflex Responses (RRRs). They simply are a natural reflex for many people, like ducking if an object is flying at your head. It's instinctive. Not much thought goes into them; they just happen.

Trying to counter them with logic is tough, since, well—what would you be arguing against? We haven't heard anything of substance yet, other than the response. And you don't want to use a goofy retort that some sales books suggest: "Well, of course you aren't interested—I haven't given you anything to be interested in yet!" Give me a break.

So what should you do? Get them talking—which moves their mind away from their reflexive response and on to something of substance.

You do that by softening them first, and then using a pattern interrupt.

A model of communication called neurolinguistic programming that was popularized by many self-help gurus over the past 20 years (most notably Tony Robbins) espouses a theory and technique called a pattern interrupt. Without causing your eyes to glaze over in boredom, let me simplify it for our purposes: When people do or say something automatically, it's called a pattern. If you do something that stops that pattern and gets them talking or thinking about something else, then that is a pattern interrupt. In what city were you born?

That last question was a pattern interrupt. You were listening along, and I interrupted you with a question that probably caused you to think about the answer (or wonder if I had gone off the deep end). Either way, using a pattern interrupt when you hear a Resistant Reflex Response causes someone to answer a question. For example:

Prospect: "I'm not interested."

Sales rep:: "I see. Where are you now getting your compressors?"

Here's another:

Prospect: "We're all set."

Sales rep: "I understand. When is your next project coming up?"

One more

Prospect: "We wouldn't need that."

Sales rep: "Oh. How are you now handling written-off receivables?"

This is not difficult to execute. You simply need to anticipate the RRRs you are likely to hear, or if you have placed calls for more than a day, you already know which ones you hear. Then you prepare your response.

Your tone plays a vital role in determining the success of your reply. Use a soft, almost surprised—maybe even disappointed—tone of voice. By no means do you want to seem confrontational. We want them to open up and drop their shield—not feel threatened.

You might think that you're likely to hear something like "Look, what part of 'I'm not interested' do you not understand?" after your response, and you would be right. This certainly won't work every time; nothing does. However, you may at least be able to salvage some opportunities that you would not have gotten otherwise—possible sales you can cash in on either now or in the future. Your return on your minuscule time investment is huge, and you have nothing to lose.

The “Zuck Question”

Here's one of the greatest questions I've ever heard when getting early resistance. And it wasn't on a sales call. And it wasn't really an objection, but we can adapt it.

It was a television interview done with Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg. That's why I call it the Zuck Question.

I had originally heard the clip while listening on a business radio show, and tracked down the video. The interviewer was Laurie Segall with CNN.

Let's watch it.

So to review it, in the middle of the interview, after discussing some of Facebook's recent troubles, Ms. Segall slipped in,

“So you're not stepping down as Chairman?”
Zuckerberg replied, “That's not the plan.”

And then, here it is:

“WOULD ANYTHING CHANGE THAT?”

Brilliant!

Zuckerberg got uncomfortable, nervous, smiled, and said, "Eventually...Over time... I'm not going to be doing this forever..."

So simple, yet so effective.

It gets people thinking in terms of possibilities. And you can use variations of it as well. For example,

"We're just going to stay with what we are doing."

"What would change that?"

"What would have to happen in order to change that?"

Think of the resistance you encounter, and formulate a similar question you can use to get them to open up.

Price Resistance

Let's now talk about Price Resistance. Notice I didn't say real price objections. If you want to deal with those, you will follow the exact same process we covered right at the beginning, using the doubt creating questions. And as a little tip, you can blow away price objections in advance by attaching numbers to the problem or pain they are experiencing, and also their potential payoff with a solution, before you even give our price.

Price resistance and price comments are something different. These often are interpreted by sales reps as signs the person will not buy, and they cave in and drop their price, basically giving away profits.

I ran into a local Chinese restaurant at lunchtime to get a takeout order from the lunch menu. I asked for soup, since it wasn't included on the takeout menu. The woman at the counter told me that they did not have soup to go with the lunch specials, just for dining in.

I really wanted some hot and sour soup.

"So how can I get soup?"

She pointed to the main menu and said all they had was the big container for two, for six dollars.

"How about just filling it halfway, making it for one, and charging me half price?"

She smiled and said,

"The soup is for two and is \$6."

I bought it.

That was an example of price resistance. I didn't say I wasn't going to buy, right. While waiting out a four-hour flight delay, I nestled into one of the few empty seats available at an airport snack bar, which happened to be right by the cash register, within earshot of most of the transactions.

I couldn't help but take notice of one. A customer plopped a large bottle of water on the counter.

"That will be \$4.89, The clerk said."

"Four eighty-nine!! Holy-moly, that's more than liquor! That's crazy."

The clerk empathized, "Yeah it is pretty outrageous. You can get a smaller one for \$2.50."

The guy said, "Well that's more like it." And a sale was just cut by almost 50

My delay was so long a new work crew came in. I witnessed a similar transaction with the new counter guy—with one twist. Another customer walked up with the same size bottle of water:

"That will be \$4.89."

"Four eighty-nine! That's robbery!"

This clerk stared at him, emotionless. He leaned forward slightly, paused, then calmly said, "Well, it's the cheapest you're going to find in the airport."

The customer handed over a crisp five dollar bill. End of story. Full price sale.

The first counterperson committed the same mistake that many businesses and sales reps also are guilty of: caving in to a simple price statement.

The first thirsty customer was still going to buy the water—until the counter guy talked him out of it. Notice the customer DID NOT say, "I won't ever buy water here because your prices are too high."

He simply grumbled about the price.

Just like you or I might air out a few choice words about a traffic jam. We still must drive in it. We just aren't happy about it at that very moment. Then we get over it.

The point here is that there is a difference between, price comment and statements, and real price objections.

How should you handle real price objections? By following the process we covered right at the beginning. You need to find out what the real problem is, and then get them to doubt their belief with questions. By the way, you should eliminate the price objection in advance by quantifying the need, the pain, the problem, or their potential payoff, so that when you present the price, it's not

a real issue.

What I'll address right now are the Price Statements and comments, which cause many salespeople to start dropping price needlessly. Which by the way come directly out of pure profit.

These occur when someone is already mostly sold. They're just airing out a feeling.

They don't necessarily expect a response, although they'll gladly take one if it's offered, and that's a real bonus for them. And that's normally fatal for sales reps, because it opens you up to negotiations when they're not necessary. Just like the guy at the airport counter.

To illustrate how absurd it is to react to a simple price comment, let's turn this around: If, after giving your price, a prospect said, "Wow, that's a great price. I expected it to be more," you probably wouldn't say, "Think so? Well, let me see what I can do. I think I'll raise it by 29 then, OK?"

So what SHOULD you do when faced with a price comment?

1. Nothing. Pause. See if they continue. (Actually this is a good tactic ANYTIME you hear a price statement, even if you think it's resistance or a real objection.)
2. Then, have a statement of your own ready to go. Let's face it, if you've been on the phone for more than three days, you've already heard most of the price statements you'll ever hear. And you should prepare your response. Now, I'm not talking about "Objection Rebuttals." Those are inane, insane, and don't work, because they don't deal with the real REASON behind the objection. I'm simply talking about something innocuous in reply to the price comment.

For example,

Price Statement: "Wow, your delivery charges are higher than ABC Company."

Sales Pro: "Yes, we have an extensive tracking and quality control process."

Price Statement: "Five hundred dollars for the yearly maintenance contract?!"

Sales Pro: "Yes, that covers any service or support calls you'll have all year long."

Then, it's important to move on with the conversation. Don't dwell on the price comment. Let it die right there. Again, let me reiterate,

Giving in to price statements takes money out of your pocket and your company's profits!

Handling Stalls and “I Want to Think About It”

I recall when I was a naïve hotshot corporate sales rep, just out of college, one of my first sales managers gave me a piece of seasoned advice that I’ve never forgotten and always believed. He said, “Nothing will kill a deal like time.”

How true. With prospects and customers, today’s interest and perception of a pressing problem or need often becomes tomorrow’s bottom-of-the-pile “to-do,” until it ultimately vaporizes into the air, replaced by a new set of concerns. Like a fire on a winter night, left untended, it will extinguish itself with time. To be successful, then, it is your job to keep prospects’ flames of interest roaring.

To avoid letting time steal your sale, consider the way it disguises itself with these phrases:

“Let me think about it.”

“I need some time.”

“Maybe later.”

Why They Delay

Let’s first look at why someone might say these things and stall you.

1) They might, indeed, be sincere and truly need time before making a decision. Fine. If so, find out what specifically is going to happen, and why the time is required.

2) If they have no intention of ever buying from you, or worse, never making a decision of any type, find that out too.

3) If the matter is simply one of procrastination, and you both agree a decision would be in their best interest, it’s best that you help them take action now, since their perception of urgency will likely diminish as quickly as interest in a losing lottery ticket the instant the drawing is over.

What you don’t want to do upon hearing their stall is confront them with a slick phrase designed to push them into a quick decision. That only serves to annoy them, and perhaps even cause them to come up with more rational reasons for delaying. Like the exercise we did earlier, the best approach is to use well-placed questions to get them talking ... to help them turn their interest into action.

First we need to uncover the cause of the delay. If your reading of the situation tells you they are sincere, and there is something that truly needs to happen before they buy, fine. Just be sure they’re on your side, and help them be specific about the next action:

“So what you’re saying is that my proposal is what you want to go with. All you need at this point is to write up the justification so you can present it to the acquisitions manager and get the funds, right?”

Let’s deal with the other situations, the ones that cause you grief and waste your time and money. The ones where they’re either flat-out procrastinating, or just yanking your chain. Here are questions to help them open up and give you concrete issues you can deal with, or cause them to fess up and admit they’re not going to buy from you—which I call a success in this situation.

“What concerns do you still have?”

“What’s causing you to hesitate?”

“What questions are still unanswered for you?”

“What are you still unsure of?”

“What is it that you’re planning to consider?”

Or, you could provide choices that might help them give you a real reason for the delay.

“Is it the _____ that’s holding you back?”

Some might argue that this just offers them an easy excuse to select, one that isn’t true. Could be. But like most attempts at deception, it’s uncovered by further questioning.

If you finally conclude that this person isn’t worth further short-term effort on your part, politely let them know you’ll be happy to work with them when (or, if) they make that decision. Then move on.

For the ones who are simple procrastinators, keep stoking the fire until it reaches the point where they act. Continue questioning to make them even more uncomfortable about their need or problem. Through questions, help them feel and verbalize how much better their life would be with your product or service.

Don’t let “Let me think about it,” or other similar delays take money out of your pocket. Move them forward, or move them out.

Plant the Seed for a Callback

If you ultimately determine someone isn’t worth pursuing in the short term, or when you’ve both concluded you won’t be doing business together today, but you’d like to keep the door open for the future, you need to say more than, “Keep us in mind for the future, OK?” Naturally everyone would respond with the benign answer, “Oh, OK,” and then forget about you before the phone handset hits the cradle. Instead, create a picture for them to remember you by. Create a “mental box” in which they can place you.

For example,

“Pat, the next time you find yourself in an emergency without replacement parts when you need them, give us a call. Since we stock over 30,000 parts we’re likely to find what you need within minutes.”

Or, “Keep in mind that we’re the company that’s known for having a pool of licensed tradespeople on call for temporary jobs, so when you find yourself with more work than you can handle, we’re the ones to call.”

Sales reps waste tremendous amounts of time following up with stallers who have little intention or ability to buy. Another time and money waster is letting these same types of prospects drag the sales process on far too long. Follow these ideas, and you’ll close more sales more quickly, and spend less time with people who will never buy from you.

Bring up the objection before they do.

While listening to a rep's calls in preparation for a client training program I heard him say,

"...and right now you might be thinking that since you are in a contract with a supplier that would hold you back. Here's how others have handled that..."

And then he proceeded to masterfully remove that possible, yet unspoken objection. If there's an issue that ALWAYS comes up as an objection, it's not a bad idea to bring it up, and answer it before it becomes a major issue later.

By bringing up the objection before he does, you clear up negative thinking early in the call.

For example, the prospect may feel that your price is too high and he therefore will not be listening very carefully to what you're saying. However, by addressing the situation early, and resolving the issue, the prospect will be more open to your presentation.

Here are ways to transition into bringing up the inevitable objection:

"I bet you are asking yourself..."

"You might be wondering..."

"If you are concerned about ..."

In his outstanding book, "Triggers : How to Use the Psychological Triggers of Selling to Motivate, Persuade & Influence," copywriting and advertising genius Joseph Sugarman said that he turned losing products into profitable ones by airing the dirty laundry and disadvantages about products up front.

This reduced and often eliminated major objections to the sale.

For example, he was writing an ad for a thermostat that required installation by the consumer. Knowing that would be an objection by the consumer, he would bring it up right away at the beginning of the ad, and then resolve it by explaining that thermostat wires were on 24-volts—not enough to hurt anyone. He pointed out the wires were color coded and easy to install.

Confuse Them to Answer Objections

Here's another quick tip that's a bit unconventional. Confuse them.

If a prospect has given you the brush off, and you're getting ready to end the call, you might want to throw out a phrase that both confuses them and inherently makes them curious at the same time.

For example, let's say a caller says this at the end of a call...one thing to keep in mind for the future is a Double Co-op Tie In to build store traffic.

Prospect: (dropping his/her defensiveness) A what?

This technique helps prospects forget about their reason for not wanting to continue the conversation, and hints at something they might be interested in, therefore buying you more time to ask questions and find out more about their desires. For example, in this example the caller might say, "It's a promotion that two of your suppliers help to fund, in conjunction with a regular sale you'd be holding anyway. Let's talk about what you have coming up ..."

Focus on the Reasons for Wanting to Buy, Not the Resistance.

Think of how you would react to this statement.

"On the one hand, we really like your program. However, the lack of the reporting feature is going to stop us from working with you." Many sales reps would jump in and attack the objection. Wise sales pros take the other path and instead focus on what the prospect or customer likes:

"Ok, let's talk about that. Let's first go through what you've identified as the reasons for wanting our program."

Let them talk, but prompt them when necessary. You'll probably find they talk themselves into what you have, while minimizing their reason for resisting. A much better approach than helping them focus on the objection.

Here's a key point that will help minimize objections: Don't create or invite them. A client shared an example he heard while monitoring calls. '

Customer (who had called in and was placing an order): "Do you have the ITY5035 cameras in stock?"

Rep: "Uh, yeah. Let me see ... I do, but I don't know how long the extension cord is for the AC power."

The caller didn't ask about the cord. He wanted to buy the cameras. The cord might not have been important—until the rep got him thinking about it. Perhaps it was long enough, but because a seed of doubt was planted, the caller decided not to buy. Doubt causes inaction or fear.

Here is another.

A sales rep appeared to have the sale in the bag. The prospect was emitting buying signals, and was very enthusiastic about the rep's offer. The prospect spoke in terms of how he would use the service, and how he could find the funds for it.

Then, the sales rep continued. "Oh, and another feature that I think is just great is the ...", and he proceeded to go into a presentation on a component that the sales rep had not asked about, nor had the prospect mentioned. The prospect listened indifferently.

The tone of the conversation changed. The prospect then said, "I'm just wondering ... we really have no need for that last component. Why don't you take it out and see if you could reduce the price for me."

The rep had gone from a full price sale, to actually losing a sale because of a price objection.

One that HE had created.

So really, the very simple and obvious, but not always followed lesson here is, talk when appropriate. Yes, it's a fact that by talking too much, apologizing inappropriately, bringing up facts

unimportant to the listener and generally sticking your foot in your mouth, you can create objections which were not present until you manufactured them.

Am I suggesting that you hide information that is important to the buyer? No way. That would be unethical. I am recommending that when making a presentation you only talk about what the other person is interested in.

Ok, I'm going to end with a bunch of rapid fire tips for you.

Before writing off a prospect who you're obviously getting nowhere with, ask, "Would you say we'll likely never do business together?" This might prompt them to say never is a long time, which gives you a lead-in to more questions.

Take each of your top five competitors and determine your main advantages over them. Then develop questions to get prospects talking about their needs in those areas. For example, "How are you now affected by the order fill rate you're getting?"

To get them talking after they state an objection, say, "Tell me more about that."

To help the indecisive prospect move: "What would happen if you did nothing?"

Use the "Just suppose" technique. "Just suppose the money was in the budget. Would you go with it then?"

Question to ask when they are comparing you to a discounter: “What other expenses have you considered in the long-term if you went with the lower-price alternative?”

If a prospect says that your price savings wouldn’t be large enough to switch, ask him, “How much would you have to increase sales to generate the same NET profit as the savings we’d provide over a year?”

In response to a “Send literature” brush-off, try, “I’ll be happy to. Let’s say you like what you see. What will happen next?” Or, “Will you be ready to buy at that point?”

If budget is the problem, ask them, “What have you done in other situations where there was something you wanted that could help your department, but it wasn’t budgeted? How did you get it?”

If you hear, “I want to shop around,” ask them, “What will you be looking for?” This might help clear up any misunderstandings about what you could provide, and cause them to forgo the shopping and buy from you now.

If they tell you to call back “in a few months or so,” respond with, “I’ll be happy to. What will make that a better time for you?”

Questions and objections should never leave you at a loss for words. Every time you hear a new one, brainstorm three or four ways you’ll respond next time. Write them down in a notebook, and study them until they’re committed to memory.

Alright, thank YOU for joining me today. We covered tons of ideas for addressing resistance and Objections conversationally. If you adapt, practice and USE them I’m confident you will get more of the sales that are eluding you now.

Here’s to your sales success, I’m Art Sobczak.