

The Art of the Close

CINCHING THE DEAL REQUIRES KNOWLEDGE OF A FEW FUNDAMENTALS

Happy New Year. Now, it's time for a selling skills review for you and your employees. Surely business isn't as good as you would like, right? Not every prospect has been closed, have they?

Now is an excellent time to re-visit the basic blocking and tackling of selling. Selling the experience, selling the system, selling the gear, and selling the people on your business as the right place to spend their money. These all require the art of persuasion, which is at the core of selling.

CLOSING TECHNIQUES

You probably know the preferred closing technique of everyone on your sales team. Some are emotional closers, some are conditional closers, while others are assumptive closers. And of course, if the sales person is really good and depending on the situation, they are all of these and more. Most likely, due to the often prolonged nature of closing a sale in our industry, many techniques will be implemented during the course of the conversations leading up to the closing moment.

You, as the business owner, need to encourage your sales people to learn the fundamentals of a few of the classic closing techniques. It's too easy to assume that by talking with clients, listening to the good sales reps visiting your business, and keeping active in the community, that one continues to develop new sales acumen. These best practices do help but you need to nurture new skills or at least phase in a few new reminders to your best sales people. If they are really good, they will appreciate a pointer or two from you. After all, the best sales people are good, active listeners.

SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Here's one foible that I have experienced in many roles. Selling past the close. [Insert dramatic pause here to let that sink in], which is what you are supposed to do when you have offered a strong close at the right time. Knowing when to remain silent when selling requires a great deal of confidence and a good understanding of your

prospective customer. You will have experienced verbal and non-verbal cues such as agreement on multiple points along the way, agreeing with your recommendation for the type of control to be provided in all of the non-primary rooms, and agreeing to a proposed schedule of work completion. Non-verbal cues would be the customer leaning forward to listen more closely or if they are standing, they move to a sitting position. They might also become more involved with the printed portfolio of your work or job proposal by picking it up and going to a specific item or room concept. Now you've got 'em!

If you have been talking about system design aspects or an additional subsystem to integrate, and you sense verbal and non-verbal cues, stop talking and let the customer have a say and listen for the right moment to agree with them. Agreement is powerful. Be quiet again until they come forth with their next thought. Now you know where they are heading and instead of selling past the close, you've got them into the process of selling themselves.

STAY FOCUSED

Not selling past the close requires acute listening skills and concise sales language.

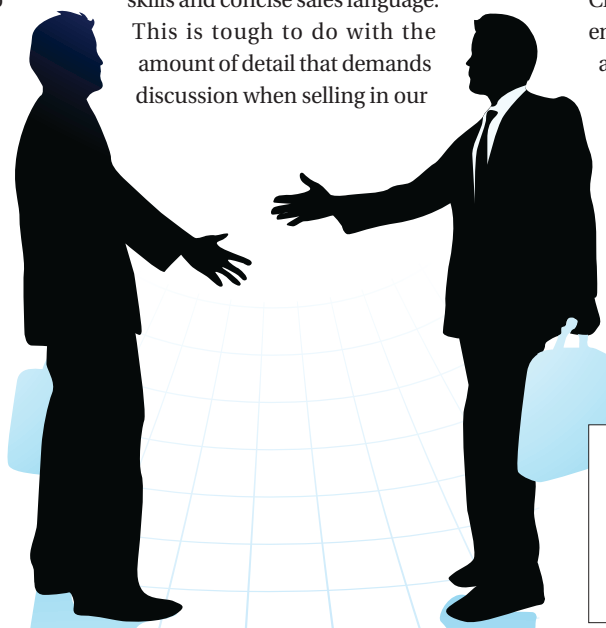
This is tough to do with the amount of detail that demands discussion when selling in our

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industry. Try to stay on topic. This means that when you are talking about the media server, that you focus on the primary features and emphasize how the server will benefit your customer. Don't go off on a tangent about the technology or how it integrates with the rest of the system. *"It has a certain amount of capacity, it can handle expanding customer content and it can be accessed easily from around the home and beyond via the Internet. Here, let me show you how."* This will often turn out to be a closer for you. Just don't over-talk. Show them and teach them to do whatever you want to demo for them. Make them do it, and they will buy it.

THE AFTERGLOW

Closing a sale is a sales person's nirvana. It's the end of the hunt, the moment when trust is flowing, and a powerful common ground has been established. This is where you need to be more frequently and more efficiently, now and in the future. You and your customer have reached détente on a most gratifying opportunity. As an ESC, you've just nailed down new revenue and new creative opportunities for your business mates. For your customer, they are excited to begin anticipating the final result. Now that you're done celebrating the sale, remember that you have to deliver.



Buzz Delano (buzz@delanoassociates.com) is an industry consultant focused on growth strategies and new market plans for manufacturers.

