

# TAKING (YET) ANOTHER LOOK AT CLOSING

MAY 2002

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If I go back over nearly six years of writing for this publication, I notice that there are a couple of themes to which I seem to return with some frequency — Closing the Sale and Closing the Sale.

I guess I understand it, though. I try to provide material in response to what people say they want. And what we all want is to <close sales>. When I do consulting work for dealers, I will often arrive in a gallery and ask the client in what area s/he feels the sales staff needs the most amount of emphasis, and guess what they say? Sure, closing.

And what a gnarly and slippery task closing can be, no?

## **WHY IS THIS SO HARD?**

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Closing the sale is the MOST daunting and aggravating part of the selling profession. It's the most misunderstood and the most mishandled of the entire art form (which is what I believe selling is). So what about it is so difficult? Why do salespeople seem to get a relatively quick grasp on the rest of the process — greeting, creating relationships, building confidence, making a compelling sales presentation, etc. — and yet, when it comes to the most important part (the money), many of them stammer and stutter and begin sounding like Jon Lovit. (“...yeah, that's it. That's the ticket...”)

In my view, the only way we, as salespeople, will ever enjoy the luxury of looking a customer in the eye and confidently asking for the money (especially when it's more money than we might make in a month!) is when we have done everything beforehand thoroughly and with complete integrity. Salespeople have problems when, in the heat of battle, they succumb to the devil's influence and make a couple of statements that are not completely true, or perhaps just ever-so-slightly shaded with prevarica-

tion. A few misstatements, even seemingly innocuous exaggerations can work their way into the final moments of the close and before long the guilt begins barking like a three a.m. dog.

“Hello! Are you really going to say that to this customer and then take her money?! I don’t think so?!”

As the old say goes, “If you tell the truth, you never have to remember what you said.”

### **WHAT’S REALLY AT ISSUE HERE?**

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Let’s assume for a moment that a salesperson has done everything right: greeted, bonded, earned the right to sell, made a compelling case for why the customer should be salivating over the work of art, etc. What could the issues be that might get in the way of making a confident close?

Here’s a couple of them I encounter every day:

- The salesperson did not ask for the sale in a way that forces the customer to make a choice
- The salesperson did not have the brass to hang in there and shut up afterward.

Now, notice I said, “forces the customer to make a choice,” and NOT “forces the customer to buy,” or “force the customer to make a favorable buying decision.”

In my mind, we have every right as salespeople, particularly at this point in the transaction (again, given the fact that we have done everything right up to here) to FORCE the customer to choose. We don’t have that right if we have short counted the customer in some way, left something out, not done our jobs as salespeople. But if we have all that in place — the right art in front of the right customer at the right time — if we’ve done all that, we have earned the right to force a customer to choose in, or choose out.

Because they will rarely do that on their own.

And that’s what closing is. That’s why they call it closing. Closing the ranks. Circling the wagons. Leaving no alternative for the customer but to CHOOSE. We don’t want them to “decide” something, because “deciding” can be just an exercise. There is a world of difference between “deciding”

and “choosing”. This is NOT just semantics. It’s just as easy to decide not to choose.

### **SO HOW DO WE FORCE CUSTOMERS TO CHOOSE?**

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It’s interesting how much power and influence that PHRASING can have in a close. Just the usage of one word instead of another in a closing remark, can have a gigantic impact on the outcome. For example, consider the difference between these two closing remarks;

“Mrs. Jones, this piece is perfect. I think you should get it, whattya think?”

or,

“Mrs. Jones, this piece seems perfect for you. Shall I start writing this up?”

Seemingly the same statement, but a world of difference in what is heard by the customer. On the one hand, a whining salesperson is heard. On the other, the culmination to a professional sales presentation in which the customer is invited to choose one course of action over another. And the invitation leaves very little, if any, room for procrastination. That’s what you want. You want to have a “yea” or “nay” — either way. And the only way to get that insurance is to practice phrasing closes to allow only those two possible responses.

The second mistake is just shutting up. Not talking past the point of sale. There’s nothing left to say and anything the salesperson does say after a closing remark just gets in the way. Just shut up.

What you want is a “yea” or a “nay”. And getting the “nay” is sometimes as good as getting the “yea.” Why? Because,

**80% OF ALL CLOSES  
OCCUR AFTER FOUR TO FIVE  
CLOSING ATTEMPTS**

Yep, I know. You hate to hear that. Me, too. But that’s what is so. If you (or someone on your staff) is the type to close once and then offer

the customer your business card, you are letting A LOT of business skip down the street to the competition.



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