

TACTics

for Sales Professionals SM



Sandler Sales Institute
180° From Traditional Sales Training [®]

WEEK 33

INTEREST, CLOSING

The TACTIC: Never ask for the sale — make the prospect give it up.

The STORY:

Nick knew that the prospect was close to making a buying decision. Her eyes darted back and forth between her left hand and the window looking out into the parking lot. Just a little more pushing and he knew she'd close.

"If you decide to buy today, I think I can talk the sales manager into an additional amount off."

Good, he thought, she's looking at me now instead of the parking lot. I'm not going to let her get away.

"Oh," she asked, "how much off?"

"Well, only if you decide to buy today, I'm pretty sure I can get him to go another \$200."

"If I can have \$350 off, I'll make a decision," she responded.

"That's pretty steep. How about \$300?" asked Nick.

"Okay. At \$300 off I'll write the check."

"You sure?" asked Nick.

"Without a doubt," she responded with a smile.

As Nick walked towards the sales manager's office, he was mentally calculating that at \$300 off, his commission would be peanuts. But, he thought, this sale would push him to the top of the board for the number of sales. He'd win the monthly \$50 bonus for most sales for the fifth month in a row.

The RESULT:

Nick will probably be able to talk the sales manager into \$300 off, and he will probably win the monthly contest for most sales for a fifth month. And Nick will collect his \$50 bonus. The problem is that Nick gave up making the sale, with a decent commission, because he was focused on winning a monthly contest.

DISCUSSION:

Even though the prospect was close to making a buying decision, Nick did not have the self-discipline to make the prospect give up. Deciding he had to push it along, Nick gave up. He gave up \$300 without having the slightest clue whether he needed to do this or not to make the sale.

Actually the prospect in this situation was the better salesperson. Nick offered \$200, the prospect counter-offered \$350 and Nick settled on \$300. The prospect made Nick give up.

In general, this tactic, which should be used by salespeople, is almost exclusively used by prospects to manipulate salespeople throughout the country. If you criticize Nick for the dollar amount of the discount, and not the fact that he should have kept his mouth shut, then you have fallen for this prospect tactic.

APPROACH:

Why do salespeople open their mouths in these situations? Simple. They fear the prospect will walk out the door without buying. Will the prospect actually not say anything and proceed to walk out the door? Absolutely not. So don't say anything. Eventually the prospect will come to the realization that you are not going to give up, and she will say something instead. Depending on what is said, use that as your basis for deciding on what to do next.

THOUGHT:

Prospects have been making salespeople give up increased commissions and sales for years... are you going to continue to help them?

TACTics

for Sales ProfessionalsSM



Sandler Sales Institute
180° From Traditional Sales Training[®]

WEEK 34

INTEREST, CLOSING

The TACTIC: Prospects who talk buy.

The STORY:

Jim knew his product information and enjoyed prospects who asked a lot of questions. In fact, he thought, the more questions they ask, the better. An in-depth answer for every question.

"Excuse me," a male voice asked from behind him.

Jim turned to find Mike Swaing, a prospect who had been in for five visits and had not yet bought anything.

"Hey, Mike, good to see you again," said Jim, offering his hand for a firm handshake. "What questions do you need answered . . . I've got the rest of the day for you."

"Well . . ." began Mike, "I think there's not really much more for me to ask. We've spent so much time together on my last visits, I think you know more about the product than anyone I have ever met."

"Thanks," responded Jim, putting his hand on Mike's shoulder, "I feel it is my obligation to fit in as much information as possible in the time I spend with customers. That way they can make the best decisions."

"I appreciate that . . . I really do. You certainly are the most knowledgeable person I've run into. But I've got some bad news for you."

"What's that?"

"I gave my boss all the information you gave me, and he went and bought somewhere else. I know you spent a lot of time talking to me, and you can be sure that I'll recommend you to others. Thanks."

The RESULT:

Jim just received The Good Human Award. This award is given every day to salespeople who educate prospects and never let the prospect talk. If the prospect gets to sit back, occasionally ask a question, and get a free product education, the prospect sees the salesperson as an educator — NOT as a salesperson.

DISCUSSION:

Jim is a bit confused as to what his job is. If Jim had been hired by the company as a trainer or educator, then Jim's approach to prospects would be appropriate.

Why do so many salespeople get sucked into the educational approach to sales? Because prospects ask questions and salespeople are comfortable answering questions. Both the prospect and the salesperson are comfortable with their respective roles. And sales, unfortunately, do happen with the educational approach. It is unfortunate because this approach only reinforces a destructive line of thought in the salesperson's mind.

Gee, the thinking goes, if I sold X number knowing so little about the product, imagine how many more I could sell if I knew a lot more and demonstrated this knowledge to every prospect and customer.

There is nothing wrong with knowing as much as possible about what you are selling. It is, however, a mistake to demonstrate to every prospect and customer the extent of your knowledge.

APPROACH:

When a prospect, or a customer, asks you a question about the product that goes beyond the basics, don't answer the question. Instead, take the question and reverse it.

"Given the cost of your product, how could we get the most out of it?"

"That's an excellent question. By 'get the most out of it,' tell me a bit about just where you think you see yourself using this."

By taking this approach you are politely forcing the prospect or customer to educate you, which is exactly what you want.

THOUGHT:

The prospect's job in a sales situation is to tell you what he needs. The only way that happens is if the prospect talks and you listen.

TACTics

for Sales ProfessionalsSM



Sandler Sales Institute
180° From Traditional Sales Training®

WEEK 35

CLOSING

The TACTIC: The bottom line of professional selling is going to the bank.

The STORY:

Whenever I think about my first days in sales, I always remember my second sales meeting. The meeting began with the usual pep talk by the management. If you have attended more than two sales meetings in your life, you know exactly what was said. "Sales are good . . . but they could be better. Our competition has a new product, but we can sell around it." And so on for the next 30 minutes.

Toward the end of the meeting, the sales manager asked the top producing salesperson to say a few words. I'll never forget what she said, mainly because it was completely different from what I expected. And judging from the looks from management, I don't think they expected it either.

"Some of you are new to the company. Those of you who have been here for awhile know what I think of the pep talk we just got. There's nothing wrong with it — it just has nothing to do with why any of you are in sales. You are here for only one reason, and that reason is not making money for the company."

"Your only job is to go to the bank and deposit bigger and bigger commission checks. And if you ever forget that's your job, or think there is something else more important than bigger commission checks, get out of sales."

The RESULT:

Melinda, that was her name, knew what a salesperson's job is — Putting money in the bank. Not what's on the board, not what's written, not what's a sure thing, not winning a sales contest, but what gets put into your bank account.

DISCUSSION:

Many salespeople lose sight of why a career in sales was so alluring at first -- unlimited earning potential. Very quickly they discover that not every prospect will buy, that there is not an unlimited number of prospects coming through the door, and that other salespeople will be glad to provide hundreds of excuses for why the number of sales made is low.

At this point, the salesperson consciously decides that a reasonable dollar amount has to be earned each month and back calculates what that translates into as total sales. This "total sales" number then becomes the dollar amount goal the salesperson strives to achieve.

While this approach is practical and logical, it does not provide the motivation for the salesperson to perform at more than an average or below average basis.

APPROACH:

Every salesperson should know what dollar amount he needs to pay the bills. In addition, he should also have the goal of doubling that number within a year. And the following year he should double whatever the figure was from the previous year.

If you agree that your job is going to the bank with bigger and bigger checks, then you also agree that you need to make more and/or higher dollar amount sales. Thus the act of making the sale to the customer does not become the goal of the salesperson, but rather it becomes a step the salesperson takes to reach his real goal — bigger and bigger checks.

Ask the best salesperson in your company what his personal goal is, and it will be to earn X more per year. Ask a salesperson in the middle of the rankings what his personal goal is, and it will be to meet his sales quota. Do you see the difference?

THOUGHT:

There is nothing wrong with putting bigger and bigger commission checks in your bank account unless you've decided that your job is to meet quota.

TACTics

for Sales ProfessionalsSM



Sandler Sales Institute
180° From Traditional Sales Training[®]

WEEK 36

INTEREST, PRESENTATION

The TACTIC: When selling, go for the top.

The STORY:

About six months ago, Tim had done some research on firms in his sales territory and decided that The Hubble Group was a prime prospect. In the course of the research, he had obtained a publicly available corporate report which contained the names of all the company officers from the CEO down to the line managers.

He decided that the best place to start would be with Jim Hurley, a division manager whose division was a perfect candidate for Tim's products. Knowing that this sale would take time because of all the managerial levels, Tim was not disheartened when it took four weeks to finally get into Jim's office.

And much to his surprise, Jim was very encouraging and recommended that Tim call on his manager, which Tim did. Again, two weeks later, Jim's manager was very positive and set up an appointment for Tim with the division's vice president. After two broken appointments and four weeks, Tim got into the vice president's office.

More positive feedback. The divisional vice president arranged for Tim to meet with the head man, the CEO. Finally, thought Tim, I get to meet with the person who makes the decisions.

The day arrived, and Tim was sitting in the president's outer office leafing through the company's newsletter. And there, on page three, was a story of how the president had just signed a three-year contract the week before with Tim's major competitor.

The RESULT:

Chances are that Tim is not going to make a sale. Chances are high that Tim will be convinced to start his selling cycle earlier, instead of at the top, with the next company. That's his mistake, but don't tell him.

DISCUSSION:

Ask ten salespeople in a business-to-business sales situation who they would like to first speak with, and nine of them will tell you the president of the company. When it actually comes time to call on the business, nine out of ten salespeople would rather die first than call on the president. They will call on anyone else first with hundreds of excuses to avoid calling on the president.

"He's too busy . . . He doesn't have a need to get involved with the product I'm selling.... He's hired people to deal with salespeople.... Even if I tried, I could never get to see him."

APPROACH:

Pick up the phone and call him. That's it. Consider this for a moment. Let's assume you are actually put through to the head person. If you ask, "I know that you probably don't get personally involved in purchasing X, could you tell me who that would be?" you will get a name. When you call that name ten minutes later and say, "I was just talking with the president of your company . . . he referred me to you. If you could get out your calendar . . ." What do you think will happen?

And if you call the head person and don't get anywhere . . . just what have you lost by attempting? Absolutely nothing.

There is no way to lose by starting at the top.

THOUGHT:

If your boss tells you to pay attention to what this salesperson is selling, you probably will. If someone two levels down tells you to pay attention to what this salesperson is selling, you'll probably get around to it eventually. If you are the salesperson in question, which situation is better for you?