

# TACTics

for Sales Professionals<sup>SM</sup>



Sandler Sales Institute  
180° From Traditional Sales Training®

## WEEK 21

## INTEREST

### ***The TACTIC: When a prospect is negative, strip line hard!***

#### **The STORY:**

"I have to tell you," stated the prospect, "all of you salespeople are alike."

Nick wanted to walk out the door, get in his car, go home and find a nice job as a mortician. At least then, he thought, the customers are dead. Having absolutely no idea how to handle this, he just nodded his head.

"Yeah, I see you know what I mean. All you do is try to sell people things that they don't need."

"Well," said Nick, "when you say 'sell them things they don't need,' what exactly do you mean?"

"This item here," the prospect said, pointing to the item in back of Nick, "you'd probably try to sell me that."

"Why that?" asked Nick in a confused voice.

"Probably because you have the best commission on it -- or it's a discontinued line."

"You've bought discontinued lines . . ." Nick started to say, and before he could finish, the prospect cut in.

"Not that I know about, but who can tell?"

"So I guess that you don't want to buy anything at all from me?" asked Nick.

"Time out, I didn't say that."

"Oh, I'm not sure what you are . . ." and Nick would have finished but could not for the life of him figure out what to finish with.

"Tell you what. Show me something within the price range I mentioned earlier, and I'll take it."

"Uh, well, OK," answered Nick.

#### **The RESULT:**

Taking a negative prospect and turning him into a positive prospect is easy. All Nick did, without realizing it, was to keep saying things that gave the prospect the chance to say more negative things. And then Nick started to take the sale away. Suddenly the negative prospect turned positive. If Nick had tried to prove that he was not like "all of you salespeople," Nick would have lost.

**DISCUSSION:**

Negative prospects are being created every day by salespeople who do not sell but try to badger people into buying. Look on the bright side. These negative prospects really do want to buy something; they are just used to salespeople who do not know what to do with the pain they feel.

Negative prospects are the easiest people in the world to sell if you remember one thing as you work with them: They don't want you to get in the way of their buying your product/service.

If you can stay out of their way, you will sell them.

Negative prospects are negative because they want to buy very badly and have not been given the opportunity to do so.

**APPROACH:**

Don't get in the way. Don't defend what you are. Don't defend your product/service. Don't get upset when they tell you that you are the last person in the world from whom they'd buy.

What you do is to reflect back the negative comments as questions. Very quickly the negative prospect will either leave or suddenly decide that you "aren't like all the others" and will do business with you. If he quickly leaves, you haven't wasted your time. If he stays, you have a customer.

And that's all you have to do.

**THOUGHT:**

Negative prospects have been created by salespeople who don't know how to handle prospect pain.

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## **WEEK 22**

## **PROSPECTING**

***The TACTIC: You don't have to like cold calls, you only have to make them.***

### **The STORY:**

Bob absolutely detests cold calling, and when he is in a sales slump, like he is this month, he'll do just about anything to avoid the phone. The past customer files in his desk will suddenly all get new folders. He'll update his Rolodex with all the new phone and fax numbers that he can remember. Picking the lint off his suit becomes a serious endeavor. Figuring out his commissions, should he make some sales beyond the normal price points, requires intense calculator work. Lunch time starts at around 10:40 a.m.

With luck, he'll remember that one of his customers mentioned three months ago that she might know someone whom he should stop by and see. At last, someone to call. But, unfortunately, she is on vacation this week. Have to mark that one to call next week.

Thumbing through his card file of past "dead" prospects, he decides to sort them by when he saw them last. Then he'll call the oldest ones figuring that by now they probably want something. But, looking at the cards, he realizes that not all of them have Date Of Last Contact filled in. "Damn, that won't work," he mutters to himself.

I know what I can do, he says to himself, feeling much better, I'll go find the sales manager and bug him about not having the latest product information sheets that were promised five weeks ago. I really need them today if I'm going to get anywhere.

Coming back to his desk an hour later, without any new product information sheets, he decides that now, since it's 2:10 Wednesday afternoon, no one he calls will have any time for him. I've got an appointment tomorrow morning at 10:45 so that kills tomorrow for cold calling. I think I'll spend the rest of the day preparing for that meeting. It is my first time into the company. I want to make a good impression.

### **The RESULT:**

Bob has not accomplished any prospecting activity that will generate any future sales. In fact, as he sits there, his prospects are being cold called by the competition. And if he contacts them some other day, only to find out they bought from the competition, will he see the point of "Why didn't you cold call me?"

**DISCUSSION:**

Unless you have a prospecting plan that is reasonable and doable, you will never do any serious prospecting. Instead, much like Bob, you will go from day to day “running into” prospects who might or might not buy your product.

Most salespeople decide to create a prospecting plan when they are in a sales slump. While a sales slump does provide motivation to do something, the psychological push to do something is based on the fear of failing. Fear is a lousy motivator because every act that the salesperson thinks of doing becomes tinged with the thought that it won't work. “And since it won't work,” thinks the salesperson in the slump, “why bother doing it. I'll just fail.” The vicious circle of sales slump, fear of failing, thinking of things to do but coloring them as probable failures, leads to doing nothing productive.

Perhaps Bob's preparation for tomorrow's appointment will result in a sale. If it does, he will believe that when he is in a sales slump, the proper action to take is preparing for a future appointment.

What will Bob do when he does not have an appointment the following day?

**APPROACH:**

There are many ways for salespeople to prospect. Cold calling on the phone, physically showing up unannounced, sending invitations to seminars, asking existing customers if they were you, whom would they call—literally hundreds of ways. None of them will work unless the salesperson does them on a daily basis.

Daily prospecting is the only method that will work if you want to be successful. How to start? Take the first thirty minutes of every morning and do one of the prospecting activities. Stop thinking about doing it and do it.

At the end of the first week you will have spent a minimum of two and a half hours looking for new business. Within four weeks you will have spent ten hours.

Ten hours a month may not seem like a lot of time, but consider this, if you ask Bob how much time he spent prospecting, he'd tell you the whole day. In truth, he did not spend one minute prospecting. He spent the entire day avoiding it.

**THOUGHT:**

Prospecting is a daily activity like breathing—If you don't breathe, you die.

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## WEEK 23

## INTEREST

### ***The TACTIC: No mind reading.***

#### **The STORY:**

“So, Nick,” said the prospect, “you have a very interesting product.”

Nick wasn’t sure of what to say. Is the guy interested or not? Or is he just trying to blow me off?

“I appreciate what you’re saying,” responded Nick, “but what do you mean by ‘have a very interesting product?’ ”

“Well, it’s just that. If you mean specifically, well, it’s well engineered and thought out. I can see many places where we can use it.”

“Oh. I’m not sure what you mean. What places?” Nick stopped and stared at the prospect.

“One place we really need this is in the front office.”

“Why there?” innocently asked Nick.

“I can see how this would cut down on our outstanding accounts receivable almost immediately. Just cutting that from 120 days to 90 days would do wonders for our cash flow.”

“I guess that’s the only place then, cutting down on outstanding receivables.”

“No, not just there. The people in the field could definitely use this to process orders.”

“How would they use it for that?”

“One of the biggest problems we have is that no one in the office can read their handwriting, and by the time someone can translate it, it’s an easy two weeks. With this, they just hand the disk to the office manager.”

“I don’t suppose that you would consider buying more than one?” asked Nick.

“Buy just one? No. We need at least two right away.”

“What would you like me to do?” asked Nick.

#### **The RESULT:**

Here’s a question—just who is making the presentation in the above exchange? Nick just keeps asking questions, and what is the result? The dream of every salesperson—a self-qualifying prospect that is deeply involved in selling the product to himself.

**DISCUSSION:**

Salespeople are not hired for their ability at mind reading. Unfortunately, when prospects make statements such as those directed to Nick, the common salesperson's reaction is to agree with the prospect and hope the prospect keeps talking. And if there is nothing forthcoming from the prospect, the salesperson keeps the conversation going, not by asking what the prospect meant by some statement, but by filling in with more words.

Nick just kept asking the reasons for the statements the prospect was making. It is easier and more productive to ask questions than to try to guess what the prospect wants to hear.

**APPROACH:**

Your goal is to learn what the prospect is thinking. You can only do that by asking what the prospect's statements mean.

How often have you thanked a prospect when he complimented your product? Thanking a prospect is appropriate, but then you should go further and ask why he is complimenting your product. You will then discover why your product is being considered for purchase. In addition, when the prospect explains why he is complimenting your product, he will be reinforcing his reasons for buying. He will be telling you the benefits of buying what you are selling.

Having a prospect tell you why he should buy your product is infinitely more powerful than you telling him the reasons why, even if they are the same reasons.

At the end of the story, Nick asks a very simple question, "What would you like me to do?" Consider what this prospect will probably do, just having told Nick how great his product is and how he sees it most effectively used.

**THOUGHT:**

You can't know what a prospect means unless you ask him what he means.

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## **WEEK 24**

## **PROSPECTING, INTEREST**

### ***The TACTIC: Never go into a box.***

#### **The STORY:**

Tim was in trouble on this one. After finally getting in to see the prospect, Tim felt like he was backed into a corner and being poked to death.

“Tim, you said the service on your product was first-rate. Just what do you mean by that?”

And Tim spent five minutes answering.

“And another thing, I’m not going to tell you my budget because every time I do that, the proposal comes in within \$10 of the top budget number. Why should I tell you?”

And Tim spent six minutes answering.

“Well I still won’t tell you the budget number, and let me ask you this, how do I know that your service really is that good? Every salesperson who walks in here tells me the same thing. Don’t bother with references. Unless you’re stupid, you’re only going to give me references that are happy. Right?”

And Tim spent ten minutes answering.

“And my last question, Tim, or at least I think it’s my last question -- the last time I bought something from your company was three years ago. You want to know why it has been three years? Simple. No one from your company, until you, bothered to ever call me to see how things were going. It was slam, bang, and gone. How do I know it’s going to be any different with you?”

And Tim spent fifteen minutes answering.

#### **The RESULT:**

The prospect had constructed a box made of questions and put Tim right inside. Tim was reduced to having to defend himself, his company, and what some salesperson had or had not done years ago. None of the questions being asked by the prospect had anything to do with making a sale. The questions were being asked for the exact opposite purpose — to keep the sale from happening.

## **DISCUSSION:**

When a prospect constructs a box of questions that reduces the salesperson to coming up with one answer after another, the chance of making a sale is small. Three things are happening from the prospect's point of view.

First, the prospect is in control of the sales presentation. Prospects who control the sales situation generally do so to keep the sale from happening.

Second, the salesperson is blindly giving information away without having the slightest idea what is going on. In short, the prospect is seeing the salesperson as someone to bully into submission, and the salesperson is allowing it to happen.

Third, should the price of the product ever come up, consider the prospect's perception at that point. "I've bullied this salesperson on everything else and succeeded, why not price, too?" While the prospect might not state it so boldly, the situation is just that — the salesperson is waving a white flag.

## **APPROACH:**

Ideally, a salesperson should never go into the box. But it will happen even with the most experienced and successful salesperson. The goal is to recognize it when it happens and stop it.

Instead of just responding to one question after another, stop answering them and start asking why the questions being asked are important.

Tim should have responded to the question of service by asking, "Why is first-rate service important to you?" He'd get a painful moment of silence and then an answer from the prospect. Just by asking the question Tim would regain control. The typical prospect response at that point is, "Service is important because . . ." Once the prospect finishes, Tim could then innocently state the following and then wait for a response, "So, I guess you've been burned in the past on the service issue." If the prospect says he has, Tim could even more innocently ask, "And what happened as a result?"

Tim is out of the box and back in control. In addition, he is also getting from the prospect exactly what the prospect considers to be first-rate service.

## **THOUGHT:**

Going into a box is a waste of time for both the salesperson and the prospect.