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Know Your “No’s”: How to Handle Objections in Sales and Customer Service**.**

You’ve just made the greatest pitch to a prospective client. The rush of the possibility and anticipation of the sale has you bright-eyed and excited. The customer seems interested in your product, and the chemistry between you two is flowing like no other.

Then, out of the blue, your customer brings up the dreaded B-word. “But…” Or maybe it’s the W-word. “Well…” A doubt has been introduced and all of a sudden, you’re not so certain that this dream sale will come as easily as you had hoped. You try to maintain your composure, but from your point of view, things are beginning to fall apart before your very eyes.

Or rather, that might be the case if you don’t know how to handle objections.

Handling objections is an important part of sales, customer service. In this session we are going to go over some important steps and tips that will help you navigate your customers’ objections with confidence and ease, so that you can reach a sale or negotiate a win-win compromise whenever possible.

**Acknowledge and Validate Your Prospective Customer’s Objections.**

Your prospective customer has put the brakes on the sale by bringing up an objection. In order to keep the sale afloat and help your prospective customer move successfully past their doubt or concern, it is important that you address what is bothering them. The best way to do this is by acknowledging and validating your customer’s point of view.

Validation is something that everyone seeks, whether consciously or not. It’s part of why making this sale is so important to you: a successful sale validates you as a salesperson. Your customer is human, so naturally they are going to want some validation too. Ultimately, acknowledging and validating what your customer perceives or has brought up as a roadblock sends the message: “I see you. I hear you. What you are saying matters to me.”

Acknowledgement and validation help make a human connection with your customer, establish good groundwork for a working relationship, and make them feel like more than just another dollar in your pocket. Were you to press on with the sale without taking this vital step, you would essentially be ignoring your customers concerns, and would guarantee a losing situation for both parties.

***Example.***

***Customer:****“Your sales pitch was great and all, but I’m just worried that your offers aren’t exactly what I want. I want only to contract an internet service—I’m not interested in LIT or landline.”*

***Sales Rep:****“I understand that concern—it’s important that you have a service that you find satisfying. Let’s see what I can do for you.”*

Here, the sales rep acknowledged the customer’s concern, and validated how she was feeling. Many customers who enter sales or customer service situations begin the conversation worried that it will be a waste of time, or that they will ultimately not be listened to or helped. The sales rep in this example was able to put the customer at ease right away, and set a pleasant, respectful tone for the objection handling process.

**Investigate Your Prospective Customer’s Objections – What Are the Underlying Needs?**

Once you have acknowledged your prospective customer’s objection, it is time to work your way towards remedying it. This requires a bit more investigation, and for you to distinguish what your customer wants from what they need.

**Every “want” has a “need”** underlying it, and that can make all the difference when overcoming objections and making a sale. Two customers with the same “wants” don’t necessarily share the same needs, and visa-versa.

Needs often go unspoken, and may take some digging before they come to light. Use good questioning techniques to get to the bottom of what your customer needs. This might include asking your customer who the product is for (to find out if the product is for a child, a teenager, an adult, etc., if applicable), what it will be used for, how often it will be used, to what capacity it will be used, size requirements, whether the priority is quality or price, and/or any other key questions that might be relevant.

And if you’re worried about annoying your prospective customer with your investigative questioning, research shows that you shouldn’t be. A[recent study](https://www.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304451104577390392329291890?mg=reno64-wsj&url=http%3A%2F%2Ftopics.wsj.com%2Farticle%2FSB10001424052702304451104577390392329291890.html) by Harvard neuroscientists found that when people talk about themselves, it gives their brains as much pleasure as money or food. This means that many customers enjoy answering the questions that will help you become an expert in their needs, overcome their objections, and make that sale.

***Example***

***Sales Rep:****“Ideally, what sort of package would you like, ma’am?”*

***Customer:****“I’m looking for only internet – I’m not interested in the landline deals. I’m looking for economy, and for a contract.”*

***Sales Rep:****“Alright, I understand that. To help me find the internet speed that’s right for you, do you mind answering a few questions?”*

***Customer:****“No, not at all.”*

***Sales Rep:****“Great. How many people will be using the internet at your residency?”*

***Customer:****“Typically two, unless there are guests.”*

***Sales Rep:****“About how big is your residency?”*

***Customer:****“Approximately 70 square meters.*

***Sales Rep:****“Okay, excellent. And what sort of activities will you be performing with your internet? Browsing, video streaming, or running heavy programs and games?”*

***Customer:****“Browsing and fast-speed video streaming. I hate having to wait for my videos to load.”*

In the above example, the sales rep used keen questioning meant to reveal the customer’s needs. This makes the customer feel like the rep is actually trying to get to the bottom of what is best for her, rather than to just make a sale and call it a day.

**Show How Your Ability to Meet the Prospective Customer’s Needs Outweighs the Objection**

Once you’ve revealed your customer’s needs, it’s time to show them how your product or service will meet those needs. Many prospective customers’ concerns are tied to attachment to wants. You can overcome sales objections by diving in and showing your customers that while their “wants” are important, making a purchase that excels at fitting their needs is even more desirable.

To make this work, it is important for you to deliver a focused pitch. Sometimes sales agents make the mistake of ignoring the information that a customer has given them, and instead spill every last amazing detail about the service or product. By focusing on the ways in which your service or product will meet your customer’s needs, you will be able to avoid pitching unwanted features and benefits, answering un-asked questions, and generally overwhelming the customer.

***Example***

***Do:***

***Sales Rep:****“Based on the information that you’ve given me, I think that the 50 Megabytes internet would suit all of your browsing and streaming needs. This option allows for seamless streaming of videos, downloads of 5GB movies in as fast as 10 minutes, and up to 4 people can use the internet at a time on multiple devices without it slowing down. So, here are our options for the internet. Present the customer with the various options available. Based on what you’ve told me about your needs, I’m going to recommend the…………. Then make a recommendation and explain the benefits of the package you recommended.*

Here, the sales rep took the customer’s needs into consideration, and showed his expertise in the field by giving her a thoughtful, precise response. He also showed her the advantage of weighing her needs – fast, economic internet – over her wants: internet only, with no landline.

***Don’t:***

***Sales Rep:****“Okay, great. Just so you know though, our combo has more benefits, more channels, and more DATA. You can also access shows online, record shows on your DVR, and even watch the recorded shows on your mobile devices, away from home!”*

The customer in our ongoing example has already told the sales rep that she wants internet to be able to stream videos at fast speeds, and that mainline phone and combo deals aren’t of interest to her. The sales rep has the customer’s needs and her wants, and shouldn’t be wasting both of their time trying to convince the customer to completely abandon both and go with what he wants her to buy. In this “Don’t” example, the rep continued to overload the customer with information about all the other options that are available, rather than exploring the different internet options to meet his customer’s needs. Go with your customer’s needs, don’t fight them.

**Use Objections as Learning Opportunities**

When you look at a situation as a learning opportunity, everything becomes more interesting, and less condemning. When a prospective customer puts up an objection, it’s not the end of the world, and usually not even the end of the sale.

By using a prospective customer’s objections as fuel for growth, you open the door to learning more about your prospective customer, and how you can better meet his or her needs. Also, the more you practice overcoming sales objections, the more skilfully you will be able to do so in the future.

If you are receiving a lot of the same objection, take note. Objections are also important to bettering our product or services. By having a feedback loop and suggesting improvements where your customers’ needs aren’t being met, you can help our product team and our company make the tweaks that are necessary in order to succeed in the future.

**Anticipate Common Objections**

Many infomercials feature commonly heard objections, which an enthusiastic narrator remedies on the spot. This technique is used to help overcome objections that viewers might have while watching, before they can become dissuaded and decide not to call in about an otherwise desirable product.

If there is a particular objection that you hear coming up often amongst customers who have similar wants or needs, you can try anticipating this with your hesitant customer. Then, you can move on to remedying it. This will show that you value transparency, and that you truly have thought of everything.

***Example***

***Sales Rep:****“And in case you’re worried about any hidden fees or extra charges—don’t be; there aren’t any. Our prices are a fixed monthly rate that don’t go up throughout the duration of the contract. You don’t have to worry about buying or paying to rent a Modem either; we include a Modem free of charge.”*

Here, the sales rep anticipated any objection or worry regarding any surcharges, or the use of the Modem, providing extra assurance and tranquillity.

**Know Your Major vs Minor Objections**

According to Tim Hopkins,[sales guru](http://www.tomhopkins.com/blog/sellingskills/handling-objections) and author of[How to Master the Art of Selling](https://www.amazon.com/How-Master-Art-Selling-Hopkins/dp/0446692743), “There are two kinds of objections: minor and major. Minor objections are nothing more than a defence mechanism. Your customer probably just wants to slow down the sales process a bit. He or she may just want a few more moments to consider all the facts and figures you’re providing. Handled properly, minor objections tend to fade away and your presentation can continue.”

Major objections, on the other hand, have a much smaller likelihood of being remedied. Major objections might include that you are asking for a price that is just too much for the customer to afford, or that our product or service is just genuinely something that this prospective customer does not need right now.

Knowing which objections are which can help you know how to continue, and when it’s time to thank them for their time and move on.

**Don’t Interrupt an Objection**

Sales is a two-sided process; your customer listens to you, and you listen to your customer..

By resisting the urge to jump in and counter an objection before the customer is finished speaking, you will show your prospective customer that his or her voice matters, and strengthen, not weaken your relationship.

It’s also worth noting that sometimes customers voice objections that they are currently in the process of thinking their way out of themselves. If you cut them off and try to provide a rebuttal before they can fully form a sentence, you will be depriving your prospective customer of the chance to figure out the answer to their own objection, and lowering your chance of a sale.

To make sure that you are not interrupting, try and give your two cents during a long pause, following a customer’s question, or after asking the customer, “May I?” or some other question that politely allows them to give you permission to take over the conversation again.

**Don’t Push – Empathize**

Your customers are people, not numbers, and it’s important to remember that while making a sale.

According to the Harvard Business School professor, Gerald Zaltman, 95 percent of our purchasing decisions take place unconsciously. This statistic is one of many that prove that buying is first and foremost an emotional process, not a logical one.

If you don’t relate to your customer or if you pressure them too much with the facts, you could easily lose their approval or interest while handling their objections.

**Work Your “Way”**

Involves popping a smile, talking to your customer as if you’re old friends, and smoothly showing them how their objection really isn’t a problem at all.

Many successful salespeople know how to naturally work this ability. Others need to practice in order to achieve the desired result, or opt for a different strategy altogether. While this may not work with every culture, customer, or situation, it is a great way of overcoming objections for those who know how to pull it off.

***Example***

***Customer:****“To be honest, I might not even need a two year-long internet contract. It’s possible that I’ll get transferred to another location within 6 months.”*

***Sales Rep:****“Oh, that’s no problem at all. If you break the contract, you’ll be charged an amount based on how many months you have left. And who knows, if you do stay for the entire period, you want to have great internet all year long, right?”*

***Customer:****“Okay… when would I be able to have it set up?”*

***Sales rep:****“Let me see what I can do… If you sign up today I might be able to pull some strings and slip your name in.”*

**What Could You Have Done Differently?**

If you weren’t able to properly overcome your customer’s sales objections, it’s time to step back and look at the bigger picture. What was the source of this customer’s objection? Were you unable to create desire for the product or service? Did the customer fail to perceive you as an expert? Were there any errors or mistakes in your presentation?

While it is great to analyse these things for yourself, it may be difficult to be completely objective about your own behaviour. When in doubt, ask for your Floor Managers opinion, or even the point of view of the colleague who was sitting next to you. Knowing these things can help you to do better next time.

**Conclusion**

Although they might seem off-putting at first, objections are a healthy part of an exchange between a customer and a sales rep. You want your customer to object to things that aren’t convincing them, so that you can fine-tune the sale, and help them leave as satisfied as possible.

So, next time you hear an objection don’t be disheartened; use it to perfect your negotiation skills, get back on that horse, and learn how to handle objections better and better each time!