

## Less Can Be More When Handling Objections

*By Richard Ruff*

Initially the logic of not handling an objection may sound counterintuitive, but when it comes to dealing with objections, both what you say and when you say it are the keys to success. In fact, these are core sales skills. Sales people often want to address objections as soon as they arise, get them off the table, and move on. An admirable thought... or is it? What really is driving the customer's objection? What are the issues from the customer's perspective? How important is the objection to the customer: a showstopper, a throwaway comment or something in-between?

Everyone agrees these are good questions, yet often sales people fall into the trap. Most sales people believe their solution is superior, their customer support better, and/or their pricing and business terms are more customer-friendly, and that just sharing that information will minimize objections.

But there's a problem lurking there. Just sharing information is no different than throwing the proverbial spaghetti against the wall - sometimes it sticks, sometimes it doesn't. Rather, sales people must slow down and actually "handle" objections, drilling down on what each objection truly is and its importance.

There are numerous objection handling models. Here is a "less is more" construct: ACT.

- Acknowledge the objection
- Clarify the objection
- Test the solution you offer

While it may sound simple, Acknowledging the objection is important. I can't count the number of times we've seen sales people ignore an objection and just keep talking, assuming, as we said earlier, that by sharing wonderful things the objection will disappear. Highly unlikely. And worse yet are sales people who ignore an objection, assuming that if it isn't addressed it will go away. Unlikely as well. Not acknowledging an objection only signals to a customer that you're not listening.

Probably the most important suggestion here is to Clarify. By clarifying, sales people can avoid the trap of hearing an objection and immediately trying to "answer" it. It is a much better idea to acknowledge it, and then ask questions to find out how important is it, and why the customer feels it is a problem. By doing this, you are changing the tone of the dialogue: you are participating in a problem-solving discussion vs. being in a defensive mode.

Finally, once a solution is offered, don't assume the objection is addressed and move on. Rather, test to make sure the customer understands the solution and agrees that it addresses the objection - then move on. Handling objections is an age-old topic - but if anything the art and science of skillfully handling objections has grown in importance over the years.

## *About the Author*

*For more than 30 years Dr. Richard Ruff and Dr. Janet Spierer - the founders of Sales Horizons - have worked with the Fortune 1000 to design and develop sales training programs that make a difference. By working with market leaders - such as UPS, Canon USA, Smith & Nephew, Boston Scientific, Xerox, Covidien, Owens & Minor - we have learned that today's standard for a great sales force significantly differs from yesterday's picture. Sales Horizons offers companies a new generation of proven sales training programs designed with Fortune 1000 companies... that you can deliver, modify, and brand to your organization. And the one-time license fee is compatible with today's economic realities. To learn more about how Sales Horizons helps companies achieve sales success, visit our web site at <http://www.saleshorizons.com> or visit our blog at <http://www.salestrainingconnection.com/>.*

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