



How many times should I hear 'no'?

By Naras Eechambadi

Originally seen in the Charlotte Observer's "In Closing" column December 02, 2007

In my B2B sales classes at UNC Charlotte, students frequently ask how they can tell when they have tried enough closes, that is, when is “No” really “No?” There are two approaches to this question. The first is to give a specific number. The second is to explain why salespeople hear “No,” and how to reduce this response. Here is the research. According to a survey of sales executives conducted by Sales & Marketing Management magazine, it takes an average of seven calls to close a sale on a new client. However, only three calls are required, on average, to close a sale on an established account. Thus there is a standard for comparison. Further, it reinforces the value of the 80/20 principle (80 percent of sales come from 20 percent of customers) and selling more to current accounts, especially when one realizes that the average B2B sales call costs in excess of \$325. Regarding the larger issue, the students learn that the salesperson often generates the “No” response. Here are three of the most common causes of “No.”

RUSHING THE CUSTOMER

Customers buy when they are ready to buy, not when you think they should. In his Sept. 9 column in this series, “The Analyzer” told how his company nearly lost a major client by moving too quickly. Naras Eechambadi reminded us that pressure can cause resentment and stonewalling. Failure to understand the customer’s decision-making process and sense of urgency can turn a probable “Yes” into a certain “No.” Rather than force a close, wait until the buyer tells you it is time. Orvel Wilson, co-author of the popular “Guerrilla Marketing” series of books suggests working with clients at their pace to create a shared vision and mutual ownership of the decision to say “Yes.”

IGNORING THE CUES

We all communicate verbally and non verbally in face-to-face settings, and research shows that nonverbal communication carries more meaning than the spoken word. Clients send subtle cues that tell of their unwillingness to buy long before they ever utter the word “No.” Ignoring subtle negative cues (e.g., lack of eye contact, silence) means missing the nonverbal “No,” and soon generates the not-so-surprising verbal “No.” “Listening” while clients send nonverbal cues can be very helpful in reducing “No” in response to closing attempts.



1930 Camden Road Charlotte NC 28203 877.570.2199



OVERSELLING

Salespeople know that customers buy the benefits that a product or service offers them, and that features are meaningless unless connected to buyer-specific benefits. However, mentioning too many benefits can be as confusing and harmful as not mentioning enough. A thorough understanding of customer needs, gained through questioning, indicates which benefits are right for this customer. Those are the ones that count. Selling the “sizzle” is fine -- having to perform the Heimlich maneuver, not so great.

In closing, not all attempts are successful and we hear “No” from time-to-time. However, reducing the “Nos” goes straight to the bottom line by cutting the costs of repeat calls. Practicing not rushing the customer, listening for cues, and avoiding overselling can help.

.....

About Quaero

Quaero is a marketing and technology services company that helps Fortune 500 enterprises accelerate and improve marketing performance globally. The company helps organizations generate significant growth by bridging the gap between marketing and technology and create a culture of effective marketing. Quaero serves hundreds of category-leading clients in the Financial Services, Pharmaceutical/Healthcare, Travel and Leisure, Retail, Telecommunications and Business Services industries.

Naras Echambadi is the CEO of Quaero, a marketing and technology services company that helps companies looking to improve the effectiveness of their marketing efforts and marketing technology investments. He is the author of *High Performance Marketing: Bringing Method to the Madness of Marketing* (Kaplan Professional Press, 2005).

For more information, call 1-877-570-2199 or visit the Quaero web site at www.quaero.com.

ACCELERATING
MARKETING
PERFORMANCE