

## 6.1: Objections Are Opportunities to Learn

### Handling Objections: The Power of Learning from Opportunities

#### Learning Objectives

- Understand what a sales objection is and why they occur.
- Learn how overcoming objections can strengthen a relationship.

Since you are constantly selling in your everyday life, you have also undoubtedly encountered objections: your friend doesn't want to see the same movie as you, your brother doesn't want to share the car, your parents want you home earlier than you would like. When you attempt to convince someone or "sell" him on your point of view, you are not always successful. But each time you "sell" your idea, you usually have additional information or a fallback position so that you can get what you want while meeting the other person's needs. You are probably more skilled in overcoming objections than you realize.

Occasionally in your sales career, you will encounter a situation in which you are able to close the sale directly after giving your sales presentation. Such a situation, however, is the *exception* not the *rule*. Objections are simply a natural outcome of the sales process. Each potential prospect has his own set of unique needs, and, though you may identify most of them during the pre-approach stage of the selling process when you do your research, you will not be able to anticipate all of them. After all, you are not a mind reader. Besides, if all it took to excel in sales was to deliver a perfect script, anyone could do it. But that is not the case. The essence of sales is handling objections and truly understanding how you can help your prospect meet her needs. It is a demonstration of your skills as a salesperson to find the opportunity in these objections, listen to your prospect, and then respond. So an objection is simply a question from a prospect that indicates that she wants more information. If she weren't interested, she wouldn't be asking questions.

Objections are not *bad* or an omen foreshadowing failure. On the contrary, resistance usually portends commitment. If a prospect is asking you questions, you can at least assume that he is interested in your product or service. In fact, in all likelihood, he already knows whether or not he needs or wants to make the purchase. Thus, the reason he is objecting isn't necessarily because your presentation failed to communicate the features, advantages, and benefits of your offering. Rather, he is objecting because he is seeking reassurance; he is on the fence of indecision, and he wants you to provide him with the incentive that justifies an immediate purchase. Supply your prospect with the right information, that is, show him why he wants to buy your product or service.

#### What Are Objections?

"Sales objections are issues that prospects communicate to sales professionals as reasons why they can't buy a product or service from them." Bryan Gonzalez, "*The 8 Most Common Sales Objections by Prospects & How to Overcome Them*", October 22, 2021, <https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/the-5-most-common-objections-during-prospecting-and-how-to-overcome-them>, (accessed May 23, 2024). While *objection* may sound like *rejection*, you should never assume that when a prospect asks a question or expresses a concern that you have failed to generate interest in your product or service—it is more about the need to clarify misconceptions about the product or service to reassure the prospect about their buying decision. Yes, it is true sometimes that your prospect will object when they truly cannot or do not want to buy. Usually, though, objections mask—intentionally or unintentionally—a request for more information. They simply signal your prospect's level of interest and alert you to what actions need to be taken to bring the sale to a close. If your prospect expresses objections, consider them invitations to continue to sell. Furthermore, leverage these objections into an opportunity to continue to build your relationship with your prospect so that you can continue to create a positive influence on the buyer's decision. The fact is objections help you build your relationship and find the true reason for resistance. Think of objections as opportunities. You may find it interesting to know that in sales, 80% of prospects say no four times before they say yes. Ramin Assemi, "*55 Shocking Sales Statistics That'll Change the Way You Sell in 2024*", <https://close.ghost.io/39-shocking-stats-that-will-change-the-way-you-sell/>, December 8, 2023, (accessed May 23, 2024). That means that it's more likely than not that you will experience a prospect who poses at least one objection: asking a question, requesting more information or time, or pushing back due to financial constraints. Without objections, you would have no way of knowing what a prospect is thinking, what concerns they have or what barriers might be in the way of them saying, "Where do I sign?"

Think back to the steps of the selling process that you have covered so far: prospecting and qualifying, pre-approach, approach, and presentation. Throughout each of these steps, your focus is on understanding your prospect's needs and building a relationship. "Addressing objections not only helps you close more sales, but it also strengthens your relationship with the prospect. By showing that you understand their concerns and are committed to finding a solution that works for them, you build trust and establish yourself as a valuable partner." *"Objections Are Opportunities!"* <https://linkedin.com/pulse/objection...-shane-arnott/>, April 19, 2023, (accessed May 24, 2024.) The same is true for this step: handling objections. This is all about learning more, finding common ground, and providing the solution that is best for your prospect. Objections and conversation help you better understand exactly what your prospect wants and needs. The bottom line is that you don't want to avoid objections; you actually want to encourage objections and ask for them.

## Why Prospects Object

While prospects may voice their objections in different ways, just about every objection comes down to one of four reasons: not enough money, no perceived need, no sense of urgency, and no trust. David Shaby, *"The Four Types Of Sales Objections And How To Overcome Them"*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinesscouncil/2021/12/22/the-four-types-of-sales-objections-and-how-to-overcome-them/?sh=48b96cde6803>, December 22, 2021, (accessed May 23, 2024). As a selling professional, you have control over each one of these objections but it's too late if you address it only when the prospect objects. In other words, you are actually handling objections at every step of the selling process. For example, you can avoid the price objection with a thorough overview during your first step of the selling process. If a prospect does not have a perceived need or high sense of urgency to buy your product or service, your challenge is to understand the drivers of their business. Every business has challenges, and your role from the time you qualify the prospect is to understand your prospect's "pain points," those issues that cause problems for them and their company and present barriers to growth. If you truly understand your prospect's business, it is much easier to present a solution that addresses the perceived need and reasons to buy it now.

- **Anticipate objections.** Put yourself in the shoes of the customer. Think about every possible objection you might get—before you get it. That means making a list of every objection before you even make your presentation and building in the response into the presentation. Your success as a salesperson will largely be determined by your ability to anticipate and handle objections. Then, give your presentation to a friend or colleague and see if they can find any additional objections. Although you can't make your presentation "objection proof," you can anticipate and be prepared for most objections that will be raised. Anticipating objections helps you be responsive, rather than reactive.
- **Raise objections first.** Since you have done so much preparation and you understand and have a good relationship with your prospect, be proactive and be prepared to raise objections first. When you raise an objection, you actually turn it into a discussion point rather than an objection. It shows your prospect that you are thinking about the sale from her perspective and helps you build the relationship. Let's say you are a retail salesperson at a major department store. You know price is a common objection. Instead of waiting for the customer to raise it, Josh Turner suggests saying: "You know, a lot of the women I help in here think that Nordstrom is too expensive. We have stylish outfits for any budget, is there a price point you had in mind?" Wow, they salesperson understands the potential hesitancy due to price and normalized it! Now, the customer knows others feel the same way, and the customer and salesperson are on the same team. Let's take a B2B example. You are a financial advisor and you're speaking with a prospective client. You know they already work with a financial advisor and that this will be a big objection – in fact, the customer feels he's doing fine and they're not in the market for another financial advisor. This is where you can say, "A lot of the clients I work with think their financial advisors are doing a great job..." When prospects self-identify (they are thinking about what you are saying, at the same time!) you have created interest and trust, and they are receptive to learning more. Josh Turner, *"How To Defuse Sales Objections Before Your Prospect Even Brings Them Up"*, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/how-defuse-sales-objections-before-your-prospect-even-josh-turner/>, August 7, 2018, (accessed May 24, 2024).
- **Handle objections as they come up.** When you are giving a sales presentation, very often the prospect will ask you questions as you go. It is unlikely that your prospect will wait until you have finished your presentation before asking you questions. However, the experienced salesperson will actually encourage questions throughout her presentation since she knows that responding to them supplies her with precious time that she can use to further demonstrate how her offering can solve her prospect's problem. As a rule, you will want to acknowledge objections as they arise. If you feel that the objection will be addressed at a later point during the presentation, you may postpone your response, but you will need to communicate this information to your prospect.

Objections should not intimidate you or dissuade you from continuing the selling process. Rather, you should consider objections opportunities to learn more about your prospect's needs. The more you understand about your prospect's needs, the greater your ability to determine how your product or service can satisfy them or how your product or service *can be improved* to satisfy them. Remember, selling is about solving problems. The solution that you offer will demonstrate to your prospect whether or not you truly understand his needs and whether or not you have his best interests at heart. By embracing your prospect's objections and handling them effectively, you will inspire his trust, confidence, and most important, loyalty. As a result, both you and the prospect benefit.

## The Trial Close: Rooting Out Unknown Objections

While you may not be able to predict your prospect's every objection, you can at least predict that *they will object*. Knowing when to expect objections is the first step to handling them: you will eliminate the chance of appearing caught off guard or unprepared to discuss the product or service that you are selling. Given that it is possible that the prospect may object at any time during your sales call—from introduction to close— Rhys Metler says you should trial close whenever want to see how your prospect or customer feels about the sale or a particular feature (whereas closing is asking for the sale). Rhys Metler, "*The 8 Best Sales Trial Closing Questions to Guarantee the Best Deal*", <https://www.salesforcerearch.com/blog/8-best-sales-trial-closing-questions-guarantee-deal/>, November 9, 2017, (accessed May 24, 2024).

Examples of trial closes include:

1. So, you are looking to get started on {insert date}?
2. Does the product/solution make sense to you?
3. How do you feel about the solutions we have discussed so far?
4. What do you think about {insert product feature/benefit}?
5. Based on what we have discussed, do you have any questions about XYZ?
6. What do you think of the proposal?
7. What do you see as the next step in the process?
8. When is a good time to send you the paperwork?

You trial close so that you can move onto the next phase in the sales call. Once you ask the trial close question, simply stop talking and wait for the customer to reply. What they say will tell you where you are in the sales process and the next steps you should take. Rhys Metler, "*The 8 Best Sales Trial Closing Questions to Guarantee the Best Deal*", <https://www.salesforcerearch.com/blog/8-best-sales-trial-closing-questions-guarantee-deal/>, November 9, 2017, (accessed May 24, 2024).

## Key Takeaways

- **Objections** are a normal part of the selling process and are not a personal reflection on you but rather an opportunity to learn more about how the customer is evaluating the potential purchase.
- **Objections** actually help build relationships because they give you the opportunity to clarify communication and revisit your relationship with the prospect.
- The best way to handle **objections** is to be thorough in every part of the selling process from qualifying through the pre-approach, approach, and presentation.
- It's a good idea to anticipate **objections** by reviewing your presentation, writing down every possible objection, and building it into your presentation.
- Prospects object for four key reasons: **money, no perceived need, no sense of urgency, and no trust**.
- Prospects may pose **objections** at any time in the selling process.

### ? Exercise 6.1.1

1. Go to a local health club and go through the sales presentation as if you were going to join. What objections would you have for the salesperson? Which objections did the salesperson address to your satisfaction? Which objections did the salesperson not address to your satisfaction? Why?
2. Try to sell your professor on conducting class as a study period next week. How would you prepare for the "presentation" to make your case? What are some objections you might receive? How might you handle the objections?
3. Identify the three most common points at which objections occur in a sales presentation. Provide an example of each one in your everyday life.

4. Assume you are selling real estate and you are calling a prospect to set up an appointment. How would you handle an objection that she doesn't have the time to meet with you?
5. Assume you are a financial services salesperson. You have presented an investment strategy to your prospect, and he has objected because he is concerned about the state of the market. How would you handle this objection by making him feel more comfortable with the risk?
6. Contact a salesperson for a local business and ask him how he handles objections. Share your findings with the class.

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