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sales & training solution

# LEARNING THE LANGUAGE

## Three Communication Tactics to Increase Closing Percentages

Think about the last time you purchased something. Why did you decide to buy it? What problems did the item help to solve? What did that item do to make your life easier, more comfortable or more enjoyable?

One of the rules my company follows states, “People buy for their reasons, not yours.” Unfortunately, most people won’t come right out and tell you why they are talking to you. They want to give you little info, and expect unpaid advice.

Many times in a selling situation the customer will put pressure on a sales person to answer questions they don’t want to answer yet, or don’t know the answer to. This article offers you three techniques to help your salespeople combat these situations, and keep the conversation moving toward a sale.

We all know that the key to successful selling is asking questions. Utilize these three techniques to help your sales team feel more comfortable asking questions to discover a customer’s buying signs.

### Cushion Your Approach

Since consumers often regard salespeople as being “pushy,” it’s incredibly important to set the stage for your conversation with the appropriate cushions. Cushions are initial questions or phrases that soften the approach. They allow customers to respond to your requests without getting defensive. Tone of voice plays a key role here. Don’t frighten the prospect. Speak in a soft and friendly voice.

Need a way for your sales team to remember the importance of cushions? Use another rule we follow: “If you feel it, say it gently,” which serves as a guideline for communication throughout the sales process.

Examples of cushions are:

1. “Sounds like you’ve done your homework...”
2. “Tell me if I’m wrong, but...”
3. “Can we talk off the record?”

Each example stated above respectfully redirects a potentially uncomfortable situation. Example No. 1 could be used to address customers who are pressuring you on price after shopping online. Here’s how this scenario would go using the appropriate cushion:

**Customer:** “I’ve been looking at XYZ car online. What’s your price?”

**Salesperson:** “Sounds like you’ve done your

homework. Can I ask you something? If I am not as up to speed on XYZ car as you are, will you get upset?”

**Customer:** “No. Just want the price.”

**Salesperson:** “Here’s what I know; I’ve never lost anyone over price and you won’t be the first. What else besides price is important to you? I may not be able to do everything you want...”

Like this scenario shows, cushions give you the power to control the conversation. They provide ample opportunity to test the waters and find other factors that are important to the customer, but were not revealed to you upfront.

### Deflect Pressure to Gain Insight

Deflections help to keep the conversation moving. Many times in a selling situation, the customer puts tremendous pressure on the salesperson. The salesperson often feels as though they must have a perfect answer to each of the customer’s comments, or they’ll lose that customer. The act of deflecting utilizes challenging questions and statements to place pressure back onto buyers. This entices the customer to reveal more information and helps the salesperson gain clarity regarding what the customer *really* wants.

In many cases, sales reps assume they know what the customer is asking for. To ward against this mistake at your dealership, use the rule, “Assumptions are the mother of all screw ups.” Making your sales team aware of this will help to ensure they ask more and assume less.

Examples of deflections are:

1. “What were you hoping for?”
2. “How do we get around that?”
3. “Let me make sure I understand...”

Examples one and two push the conversation along by answering the customer’s initial question with another question. This tactic is very effective, but only to a certain extent. If the buyer grows impatient and you still need answers, try starting a sentence and pausing as though you’re searching for a word. This method, as illustrated in example three, gives the buyer the opportunity to finish the statement for you.

### Rescue Me

Let’s pretend one of your most veteran sales reps just greeted a new customer on your lot. The customer is in the market to buy, but spends much of the time badgering the sales rep with detailed questions and pressure on

price. In an effort to prove his intelligence, the sales rep is quick to answer each of the customer’s pressing questions. Yet, what this sales rep fails to realize is that his attempts to seal the deal with educated answers will only hurt his odds of selling in the long run.

The knowledge of a salesperson is valuable. Customers understand this value and push to get as much information as they can for free. Don’t let your salespeople become unpaid consultants. Help them gain information as opposed to giving it by utilizing the rescue technique.

The rescue technique serves three purposes: to help sales reps test the waters, to guard against information overload and to decrease buyer resistance. While acting like a “dummy” may seem unnatural for most salespeople, it could determine the life or death of their next sale.

Examples of rescues include:

1. “I’m a little confused...”
2. “You tell me if I’m wrong...”
3. “My bad. I didn’t do a good job explaining...”

These examples provoke the customer to rescue you with an informational yet empathetic response. This technique keeps the customer talking, and allows the salesperson to discover more useful information. This technique brings customer defenses down quickly because the customer feels that they are smarter.

Remember this: The best form of humor is *always* to make fun of yourself; and the best way to build rapport is to make someone laugh. By utilizing rescues, you have the power to diffuse the customer and build rapport in seconds.

Since this is a one-page article, I only shared a small sampling of cushions, deflections and rescues; and how utilizing these techniques can help your sales team convert more buyers. If you are interested in more examples, please e-mail me at the address below with the subject line “EXAMPLE.” I will send you a PDF copy of G&A’s “Guide to Improving Sales Talent: Cushions, Deflections and Rescues.”

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