

Mastering Objection Handling/Closing

After prequalifying, objection handling is where a sales rep tends to fail the most and where the sale is lost. As mentioned in the presentation/demonstration phase of the sales process; if you deliver a powerful, quality presentation; most if not all objections should be removed. Objections come up through all phases of the sales process beginning at the initial greeting stage to the final close and sometimes after the sale has been consummated (buyer's remorse).

It is imperative if you are going to elevate your business to the next level that you become an expert at handling or managing objections. In order for you to become an expert or "master" objection handler, you must gain an understanding of:

- 1. The difference between an objection and a condition.**
- 2. How to conquer the fear of receiving an objection.**
- 3. The art of overcoming objections.**
- 4. 13 keys to becoming a master objection handler.**

Objections and Conditions

Often a salesperson will confuse objections and conditions. If handled correctly an objection can be overcome and result in a sale or continue moving forward in the sales process. Conditions, however, are barriers and problems that cannot be overcome. Financial inability for one can be a condition. The prospect just doesn't have enough money available or the qualifications necessary to acquire financing to secure your product.

By definition, an objection is a statement by your prospect that they want to know more information. The prospect is not saying no to you, rather if you can solve or handle whatever their request is or answer their question to where you satisfy and solve their need or problem. If you have effectively overcome their objection, you will close the transaction and win the sale.

A condition is a valid reason the prospect has that prevents them from moving forward. It is a total block to the sale that must be accepted by the sales rep. Conditions should be weeded out at the prequalifying stage. A master objection handler will walk away from conditions and not overspend in time, effort and energy trying to overcome the condition. They know a condition cannot be overcome.

Overcoming the Fear of Receiving Objections

Some sales reps cringe at the word "objection". Their palms get sweaty just thinking about the "O" word. If that describes you and if you would like to change and become a master objection handler then you need to follow the guidelines below. A master objection handler is not only ready to overcome an objection but eagerly anticipates them.

Guidelines for Overcoming Fear or Receiving Objections

1. Objections are not "no", just a request for more information or clarification.
2. If prepared in advance, objections can be easily overcome.

Becoming a Master Objection Handling/Closer (cont'd)

- 3. If you successfully overcome an objection, you are one step closer to a sale.
- 4. If you don't master objection handling, many sales will be lost as a result.

Preparing in Advance for Objections

Every industry/product/service has objections unique to them and there are common objections that transcend or cross over many or all professions. For example: "I want to think it over" is common to every rep. "Your price is high" is another common objection. The point is you probably know by heart the ten or so most common objections you will encounter in your sales cycle. The question is, have you or your company taken the time to review each objection and come up with a strategic response that will allow you to prepare in advance and successfully overcome the objection each time it arises?

Take a few moments now to identify your top ten or so objections and come up with the best strategic response. If possible, use this as a team exercise or poll the masters in your field and ask them how they process those particular stalls. Remember objections come up as early as your first contact. If you have more than ten, create a strategic response for all and make as many copies of this page as necessary.

Before completing this exercise, make sure you have completely read the entire section on objection handling.

OBJECTION	STRATEGIC RESPONSE
1.	
2.	
3.	
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10.	

Create an objection handling script and commit the answers to memory. Review, rehearse and role play daily. Practice before going on the field like all professional athletes, entertainers etc. Always refine, improve and change your script and response as needed to get desired results. When you are "prepared" you transition from a position of fear, flight, hesitation and weakness to confidence, boldness and a winning attitude. Remember an objection is a request for clarification or more information. Your

prospects have a problem and you are the solution provider to their problem. What you are doing is simply and methodically satisfying their needs. Keep in mind that each obstacle you hurdle positions yourself one step closer to making the sale. Failure to break through and master will result in sales lost and money slipping from your fingertips that could otherwise end up in your pocket.

The Art of Overcoming Objections

Overcoming objections is quite simple and once you learn and acquire a few basic skills, takes the challenge of objection handling to a level of eager anticipation instead of dread and avoidance.

As with prequalifying the key to overcoming objections is in asking questions, listening to the answer and appropriately responding to their response.

Overcoming objections is essential to moving the prospect along in the sales process as you encounter objections at every step. At the initial greeting, you will most commonly hear: “I’m not interested, “just looking”, “I’m too busy” or “check back with me later”. These initial objections are called smoke screens. It is part of the natural built in reaction barriers people put up when being approached by sales people. It is what you say and how you respond to this which will determine how far you will go with this person. Taking them at their word and saying “ok” to their objection is nothing more than saying “goodbye” to a commission check. The very least you want to do is probe and ask one or two key questions to gauge, interest, need and motivation. It is also where you need to begin rapport building by showing them you are a professional who is interested in solving their problem.

Review the following examples of ways to respond to typical smoke screen objections.

Smoke Screen Objection	Response
1. I’m not interested.	Most clients benefit with our <i>(product/service)</i> by _____ (benefit). If I could show you how you could benefit from our <i>(Product/Service)</i> would you be interested then?
2. Just looking.	Is there anything in particular you are looking for that I could point you in the right direction?
3. Too busy.	When would a better time be for us to meet when we could discuss the benefits you will receive?
4. Call me later.	I would be happy to do that. By saying this does it mean you are interested in our <i>(product/service)</i> . When would it be best for you to meet again?

There are other ways to respond to these smoke screens. You must keep your foot in the door and conversation going. The art of overcoming objections is to:

- 1. Validate their concern**
- 2. Ask open ended questions**
- 3. Practice active listening**
- 4. Identify, isolate and overcome**

Becoming a Master Objection Handling/Closer (cont'd)

The last thing you ever want to do with your client is to argue, disagree or arm wrestle them. You must maintain calm, patient and stay in control of your emotions. Never get angry. Instead of disagreeing or discounting what the prospect says, agree in your response that you understand what they said. There are many ways to do that. Here are some:

- **I understand**
- **I understand what you are saying**
- **Say “and” instead of “but;” “and” says “I understand and in addition we could”**
- **“But” negates anything said prior and takes you to a confrontation level with your prospect.**
- **Use feel, felt, found (used mostly on objections, later in the process). “I understand how you feel, I have felt the same way and what others like you have found is when they”**
- **Genuinely show you care.**

Ask Open-Ended Questions

Always ask questions that require an answer other than yes or no. (The exception is when all objections are removed and it’s time to ask for the sale. That will be addressed in the closing portion of this section.)

Objection Example: “I am comparing against three or four of your competitors.”

Question Examples: “Which of my competitors are you comparing against?”
“Based on the information you have; how would you rank them in priority?”
“What is it about (main competitor) you like most? Least?”
“What factors are you using to base your decision, on which company/product to purchase?”

Depending on the situation, you might ask some or all of those questions. Get the prospect to talk and give you all the information you need to satisfy them.

Practice Active Listening

Most sales people lose a sale because they talked too much and didn’t listen enough. Practicing active listening forces you to listen because you must repeat back what you heard. It keeps validating to them your concern to meet their need the right way and most of all that you are listening. Using the same example used above, the following example is rephrased slightly on how to respond by active listening.

Objection: “I want to shop around before making any decision.”

Active Listening Response: “To make sure I understand what you are saying, I want to clarify that I understand you say before you make any decision on purchasing a product like ours you need to compare first. Is that correct?”

That doesn’t mean if the prospect responds by saying “yes” you stop there, let him off the hook to shop. It shows you really want to make sure you understand and are listening. In general, you should be listening 80% of the time and talking 20% (asking questions and responding to their answers).

Identify/Isolate and Overcome

The core skill necessary to overcome objections is in identifying, isolating and then overcoming the objection. Too often sales people never get to the bottom line objection. They get an objection or stall, make one feeble attempt to overcome, fail and let the prospect go. When you successfully learn how to identify and isolate your objections, overcoming them becomes an easy process.

Identify

You must ask questions to pullout the true hold up or objection that is delaying the sale. Many times, the prospect won't say what is causing them to stall. Sometimes it is a result of their non-confrontational behavior style (S, S/C and S/I) that won't tell you. When you have completed the presentation and overcome all objections, and from your standpoint the prospect should close but doesn't, you need to find out why. The following questions are examples of how to identify the objection holding up the sale.

“What is your greatest hesitation or fear toward moving forward today?”

“What is it exactly that is preventing us from coming to an agreement today?”

“What is holding you back from making a decision today?”

Once you have identified the objection based on their response, you must isolate the objection by identifying again if this is the objection or are any additional lingering hang-ups remaining that need to be addressed as well. The following questions are examples of how to isolate the objection.

“Is (state objection) the only thing holding us up or is there anything else?”

“Besides (objection) is there anything else that would prevent us from coming together today?”

“If I can solve (objection) for you to your satisfaction, would we have a basis for doing business today?”

“Is there anything else, or if I solve (objection) to your satisfaction could we get together today?”

Once you have identified and isolated the bottom line objection(s) and have determined that if you satisfy them you have their business, you must overcome the remaining one or two objections. Like a surgeon, take each objection and carefully address each one. **ASK FOR CLARIFICATION AND VALIDATION.**

Once you have received confirmation that you satisfied those needs, you move to ask for the sale.

Closing the Sale

Closing questions just don't happen at the end of the sales process. All along the way you will ask “mini” closing questions to move the prospect along.

At the **initial greeting**, before pre-qualifying, you might ask:

“Would you like to take a few minutes to see how you would benefit from our (product/service) and if there might be a possible fit?”

Becoming a Master Objection Handling/Closer (cont'd)

After you have **pre-qualified**, to move forward you might ask:

“Should we spend more time together to determine if (product/service) works best for you?”

After the **presentation**, you should “assume the sale” and ask for the order.

Closing for appointments is necessary: Using the “either/or” close is best.

“When would a good time be for us to get together? Would later this week work or early next week be better? I could meet with you on Monday or is Tuesday a better day? Would you like to meet in the morning or is afternoon best? I have an opening at 9:00 a.m. or would you prefer 11:30 a.m.?”

Either/or questions lead the prospect to the ultimate conclusion—in this case an appointment setting. This script is an example of how to lead your prospect to the ultimate conclusion.

Another example of leading a prospect to the ultimate conclusion is provided below with the price objection. Every sales rep faces that objection. Here is an example of how to level shift the objection from price to value, then ask a series of questions which will lead your prospect to the ultimate conclusion.

Objection: “Your price is high. I want to shop for a better rate.”

Example of Response:

“Is price the only consideration in your decision process or is value and results more important?”

Have you ever made a decision before based on price where you later discovered the value was low and the results were not good? The phrase: “You get what you pay for” is just like that.

Is there more information about our product you need to be absolutely certain the value justifies the price? (if no, continue)

Which other companies (products) were you comparing against?

Based on the information you have, rank in order the ones you like best.

If you had to choose one now which would it be?

Before you shop would you like to see how we stack up against our competition with the main features so you can really compare apples with apples?

If it is determined our value is the best what will you do?”

Sometimes the goal is not to close the sale but “buy more time” to allow yourself the opportunity to make your case one more time, do a presentation and/or continue with objection handling.

Identify, isolate and overcome any other objections that might arise.

Now that you have removed all barriers it is time to ask for the sale. This assumes you have done all the previous steps correctly.

- **Initial greeting – built instant rapport**
- **Pre-qualified effectively**

Becoming a Master Objection Handling/Closer (cont'd)

- **Delivered a powerful presentation**
- **Overcame all objections**

You have earned the right to ask for the sale. If the above steps have been done correctly the answer should be YES! In most cases, assuming the sale works best. Closing questions include:

“Should we go ahead and get started?”

“Since all of your needs are satisfied should we take the next step and get started?”

“Is there any other reason why we shouldn’t just go ahead with the final step now?”

“Are you ready to make a commitment now?”

“Should I start the paperwork process?”

“How would you like the title (registration) to read?”

“When would you like to take delivery?”

“I can have this ready for you by the end of the day, or would you like me to expedite things sooner?”

When the prospect says yes, they become a client and your goal now is to make them a client for life. Providing genuine service, client care and staying consistently in contact with them continually providing value will keep them and their friends-family coming to you for years to come.

13 Keys to Becoming a Master Objection Handler

1) Have Confidence-Authority

- a) Come from a position of strength.
 - i) Gain the expertise-skill level necessary.
 - ii) Become an industry expert.

2) Focus

- a) Play to win.
- b) Keep your eye on the target.
- c) Assume the sale.

3) Conviction

- a) Believe in yourself, company and product.
- b) Sell and close with conviction.

Becoming a Master Objection Handling/Closer (cont'd)

4) Passion

- a) Believe your product/service is best without exception.
- b) Sell and close with passion.

5) Enthusiasm

- a) Display genuine excitement for the future, possibilities and business relationship with prospect.
- b) Sell and close with enthusiasm.

6) Flexibility-Adaptability

- a) Find and push your prospect's hot button.
 - i) Expose their need.
- b) Adapt-blend to their behavior style.
- c) Change with the tide, circumstances.

7) Create a Sense of Urgency

- a) Time is of the essence.
- b) Need to start now.
- c) Lost time can never be recovered.

8) Master the Most Common Objections

- a) Identify and script strategic responses.
- b) Role play.
- c) Eagerly anticipate objections.

9) Craft Your Questions so they say YES

- a) Ask the right series of questions.
 - i) Use whatever they say to your advantage
- b) Lead them to the ultimate conclusion.

Becoming a Master Objection Handling/Closer (cont'd)

10) Persistence (Determination)

- a) Ask again and again.
- b) Ask in different ways and angles.
- c) Don't give up.

11) Assertiveness

- a) Don't be afraid to ask the tough questions.
- b) Call back if necessary.
 - i) Be careful not to cross the line of overbearance

12) Integrity-Ethics

- a) Never compromise values, morals
- b) Maintain high level of honesty.
- c) Don't compromise values (purpose).
- d) Under promise-over deliver.

13) Close with Prospect's Best Interest in Mind

- a) Align best product/service to meet their needs.
- b) Are they better off with or without your product/service?