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SALES SAVVY

Using words effectively to close a sale

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Never put words into your prospect's mouth. Why? Some sales prospects don't like what they see as obvious manipulation. Others may temporarily adopt your words, only to disagree with them later, leading to disappointment and unmet expectations.

Yet in a stagnant economy, putting words into your prospect's mouth may be the only way to dispel the sales objections.

Uncover the right words. You must determine which words will best work for your products or services. Begin by writing down three key features or benefits. They might be related to quality, customer service or lead times — whatever makes your offering superior. Make the language simple, easily understood and memorable.

Next, put yourself into your prospect's shoes. For each of the three features or benefits you described, your prospect likely will reply with a simple question, whether they say it out loud or merely think it internally. That question is: "So what?"

Decide in advance what your answer to this question should be. In each case, devise a value statement that will address the prospect's feelings.

An advertising agency prided itself on a key sales point: "We are quick and responsive." We said: "So what?" The agency responded, "We can make changes fast." Again, we asked, "So what?" The answer provided the agency's ultimate selling point: "When you shut your eyes and envision how you would like your company to be perceived, we can make it happen — now."

So what words should you be putting into your prospect's mouth while answering the "so what" question? Try a guarantee that the company will make money. Whatever the objection, repeat it back to your prospect with another key word: unless. For example, imagine a prospect says,

“We’re not interested right now.” Reply, “You’re not interested right now, unless my product is guaranteed to make you money, right?”

By repeating the prospect’s words back, you show that you have heard the objection — yet still have a great answer to overcome that objection.

If you don’t have that great answer, don’t make the sales call to begin with.

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