

Selling the Dr. Seuss Way

"I am Sam. Sam I am. Do you like green eggs and ham? Would you like them here or there? Would you like them in a box, would you like them with a fox?"

I think most people have read this Dr. Seuss tale either as kids or to their children. What is interesting is the relevance this story has to selling. First of all, Sam is selling a product and although his prospect is not initially interested, Sam doesn't let that deter him from asking. Secondly, Sam consistently offers the prospect a choice when trying to close the sale. Thirdly, he refuses to give up. No matter how many times his prospect says 'no' Sam keeps offering alternatives. In fact, he offers fourteen options before he finally closes the sale.

Now, I am not suggesting that you pester your customers or prospects but I do believe most people give up too early in the sales process. We hear a few "no's" and decide to turn our attention elsewhere. It is your responsibility as a sales professional to ask the customer to make a decision - you cannot expect a customer to do the work for you. If you have been effective in learning about their specific needs and current situation and presented the appropriate solution to your prospect then you have earned the right to ask them for their money. Here are a few ideas that will help you reach this point:

Avoid launching into a lengthy discussion of what you can do for your client until you thoroughly understand what business challenges they face and the problems, concerns or issues they need resolved. Use open questioning to gather this information and avoid making assumptions or jumping to conclusions too quickly. Instead, listen carefully to what they say and clarify anything that is not clear. Ask them to elaborate by using prompters such as "uh-huh," "tell me more," and "what else?"

When it comes time to present your product or service, try not to limit the prospect to one option. Provide a choice of solutions that meet their specific concerns. Explain the benefits of each option, and when necessary, also discuss the drawbacks of each alternative. However, do not present so many options that the decision becomes overwhelming or difficult. Be prepared to tell your prospect which option best suits their needs if they ask.

Speak in terms they can understand, avoiding the use of terminology they may not recognize. A case in point; as I developed my web site, I found myself talking to people who were extremely knowledgeable but they used terminology that sounded like a foreign language to me. I found myself getting frustrated, and in some cases feeling a bit dumb, because I had to keep asking them what they meant. Be very cautious how much jargon you use in your presentations and make sure your customer understands what you are saying.

Recognize that objections are a natural component of the sales process. It's common for a customer express several objections before she makes the decision to commit to the purchase. Don't take these objections personally and do not assume that it means the other person is not interested. Understand that your prospect will likely have specific concerns about making a decision particularly if they have never done business with you. Clarify their objections to uncover the true hesitation – do not hesitate to probe deeper to explore the real issues preventing them from making a decision. In most cases, your prospect will give you the information you need providing you keep your approach non-confrontational and neutral. Learn to handle objections in a non-argumentative manner. When you uncover their true objection keep your response brief and to the point. Talking too much will seem that you are trying to justify your product or price. Plus, you can sometimes talk yourself **out** a sale if you aren't careful.

Ask for the sale. In many cases, your prospect expects you to ask for the sale. And as long as you do not pressure or try to coerce them into making a decision, they won't be offended by your request. Develop the confidence to ask for the sale in a variety of ways and begin asking every qualified person for their commitment. Recognize that many people want to be given permission to make a decision and look to the salesperson for that permission.

Lastly, take a lesson from Sam and learn the importance of polite persistence. The most successful sales people ask for the sale seven or eight times and don't give up at the first sign of resistance. Research has shown that these individuals consistently earn more than their coworkers and peers.

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