



Don't Settle for a No, Negotiate!

by Paul Agranat, as seen in America's Benefit Specialist

Most salespeople know the value of a positive attitude. They expect the best and they focus on closing the sale. They prepare themselves for a “yes” from customers. Unfortunately, they’re not so ready for a “no.”

They try to keep the conversation going but it doesn't work.

The salesperson's mindset is winning, not losing. “Don't come back without the order,” or, as one sales trainer says, “Wrestle them to the mat.” Although it all sounds heroic, it doesn't make sense and it's why most salespeople don't come back with more orders.

Closing every sale is a worthwhile goal, but every salesperson knows it's not going to happen. But what can happen is learning how to close more sales than you are now—in simple terms, improving your batting average. And you can do it by turning “no” into “negotiate.”

Here's how to go about it:

Recognize why sales go south.

When you're so totally focused on getting a “yes” from a customer, everything else gets tuned out and ignored. This includes critical information that can either upset a sale, if ignored, or turn a “no” into “yes,” if understood.

Whenever people meet, including salespeople and customers, each person hears selectively—and misses so much that can affect the outcome.

- Misunderstandings. These are inevitable and they can't be avoided. Each party comes with a different perception of the same information.
- Moving too quickly. All the parties are rarely on the same page at any given time.
- Incomplete information. What one party considers important, another considers of little value.
- Listening gaps. No one listens uniformly. We hear what we want to hear, and we stop listening when we are thinking about what we are going to say next.

Don't Settle for a No, Negotiate!

by Paul Agranat

This is the context—the environment—in which every salesperson operates, day in and day out. It's a minefield with danger, a place where it's easy for a sale to blow up.

Change the narrative.

It takes savvy, attentive and flexible salespeople to change the narrative before a sale hits the wall. They defuse the situation by putting their presentation aside and have a conversation with their customer. They're going into a negotiation mode.

Somewhere there's a sticking point that's keeping customer and salesperson apart. Most likely, price, volume, service, products, payment terms or timing is causing the logjam.

The purpose of the conversation is to give the parties an opportunity to express themselves openly and honestly.

- A cooperative attitude is everything. It sends the message that you want to talk—to negotiate.
- Be candid about what you want and why. Openness is essential. This is no time to be coy or for playing games.
- If something isn't clear or bothers you, ask questions. Transparency creates trust and keeps the conversation going.
- Be willing to give, if you get something in return. The goal is not to see who can wrestle the other to the mat first. It's to make it a win for everyone involved.

It's a salesperson's closing percentage that counts. The more that can be done to drive it up, the better. Quite often it comes down to simply quitting too soon. Instead of settling for "no" and walking away, negotiating keeps the conversation going to arrive at a "yes."

Paul Agranat, is National Sales Director for First American Insurance Underwriters, Inc.

First American is a Needham, MA based national life brokerage firm specializing in coaching growth-oriented producers and providing them valuable solutions to their complex cases. He can be contacted at 781.449.6800 or pagranat@faiu.com.