



Keys to Growing Your Practice

By Joey Asher, Esq.

Stupid Closing Tricks

I once met with the managing partner of a large consulting firm. He was considering bringing me in to do a seminar on how to deliver new business presentations that actually win new business.

At one point, he looked at me and got very serious. "I really just want you to address one thing in your program," he said. "That is how to close a sale at the end of a pitch. We need closers."

But "closing" is overrated. Despite what many sellers and business developers think, no magic words can make a person pick you as an adviser or strategic business partner. If you've proved that you can meet your prospect's needs better than other options, then they will buy from you regardless of how you "close."

No Magic Words

Nevertheless, many salespeople see magic in the close. I met a real estate salesman who swore to me that he closed many sales with the following technique. He placed a contract in front of his prospect and then proceeded to roll a pen down the table toward the customer. The idea behind this technique is that the prospect picks up the rolling pen to keep it from falling into his lap. Somehow, this salesman swore to me, this compels the prospect to sign merely because he has the pen in his hand.

"That's called the rolling pen close," he said, appearing quite serious. I almost burst out laughing.

One of the silliest is the "reverse close." Let's say that your customer is repeatedly saying no to everything you ask

him. Then you trick him into agreeing with you by asking a question intended to elicit a no that actually means yes. So if your prospect is in the habit of saying no, you say, "Is there any reason that you wouldn't do business with our company?"

At some point, this obsession with closing techniques sounds desperate.

It Makes Sense

The best and most straightforward way to close a sale is to politely ask the prospect this question:

We've laid out a way for you to save a lot of money. We think it makes sense. Does it make sense to you?

Your prospect usually will respond in one of two ways. Both are good.

First, he or she could say, "Yeah. It makes a lot of sense to us as well." Bingo! You've probably made the sale. Let's go get a contract and nail this puppy down.

Or, he or she could say, "Well, I don't really think it will work."

But this is good, too. If you haven't made the sale, at least you still have a chance to do something about it. Your response should be something that will tease out the key objection. "Really? Can you tell me where you think we've gone wrong?" And then, of course, you listen and hope that they will give you a chance to respond and overcome the objection.

Continued on Page 34...

had been raising suspicions amongst American investigators for over a decade. Stanford, who was knighted by the prime minister of Antigua, allegedly offered investments in low-risk, highly-liquid CDs promising rates of return double that of mainstream banks. However, the investments were allegedly very illiquid, primarily in real estate and private equity. Stanford also allegedly told investors the investments were monitored by more than 20 analysts and audited annually, when in fact only Stanford and an associate, James Davis, monitored the account; the portfolio was not audited; and its assets were not verified. Stanford has not yet been charged criminally for the alleged scam.

Julie Creswell, Clifford Krauss, and Phillip Zweig, "Texas Firm Accused of \$8 Billion Fraud," New York Times, 17 February 2009; available at www.nytimes.com/2009/02/18/business/18stanford.html?_r=4&emc=eta1; accessed 20 February 2009. **VE**

The information in this article was derived from both primary and secondary sources, which are cited at the end of each item. In cases where the authors relied on secondary sources, they do not claim that the information was accurately reported by those sources.



James Martin, MS, CIA, CMA, CFFA, senior manager with Cendrowski Corporate Advisors, LLC (www.frauddeterrence.com), provides comprehensive risk assessments, focusing on the evaluation of operating effectiveness of business processes and the internal control structure.



R. Austin Marks, CPA, CFFA, consultant with Cendrowski Corporate Advisors, LLC, specializes in risk assessment, internal control evaluation, business process review, and litigation support for partnership and divorce proceedings.



Todd Michael Jolicoeur, CFFA, staff tax professional and consultant with Cendrowski Corporate Advisors, LLC, works with management to identify operational and financial issues to improve business performance, and provides litigation support for partnership and divorce proceedings.

Growing Your Practice

Continued from page 30...

Push for Clarity

Of course, the prospect could say, "Well, it all looks very interesting. Let us mull things over and get back to you."

The we'll-think-about-it response is usually not a good sign. A non-committal is generally a sign of a weak relationship. If you've done your homework and really built a solution based on a true understanding of their business, then they should know you well enough to be honest about what they think of your proposal.

You should respond to a non-committal by pushing for clarity. "Sounds like you're not convinced. Is there anything we can do to better meet your needs?"

Remember that a good pitch is actually the final stage of the courtship. If you've done your job right, you have spent lots of time conducting discovery prior to the pitch, learning about your prospect's needs. The pitch is when you go in and

present a final proposal. If you've laid the foundation well, you'll reap the rewards with a candid conversation during the final presentation.

A clever "close" won't be necessary. **VE**

Editor's note: This column is adapted from Asher's new book, *How to Win a Pitch: the Five Fundamentals that Will Distinguish You from the Competition* (Persuasive Speaker Press, Atlanta, 2009), available at www.speechworks.net.



*Joey Asher is an attorney and president of Speechworks (www.speechworks.net), a selling and communication skills coaching firm in Atlanta. He has worked with hundreds of accountants and consultants, and with dozens of firms, helping them grow their business and connect with clients. He is the author of *Selling and Communication Skills for Lawyers* (ALM Publishing, 2004) and *Even a Geek Can Speak* (Longstreet Press, 2001).*