

Most salespeople are pretty good at presenting. And some salespeople are sharp negotiators. Only a handful is highly skilled at actually closing the sale!

No question that closing is the most challenging aspect of selling...but it's also indispensable to achieve ideal value for a given product or service. Great closers are always in demand and closing skills are highly transferable from industry to industry. Anyone who seeks a long and rewarding career in sales should work hard on becoming a world class closer!

Here are some keys to becoming a solid closer...

The Conclusion.

If a sale is a story, then the close is its conclusion. The elements of a close should not come as a complete surprise to the buyer. The close should be consistent with the thread that the seller has been pushing through every phase of the sale. If the closing statement seems disjointed or unrelated to what's been discussed beforehand, the sale will be seriously jeopardized. Contradicting a line of reasoning at the last moment also puts the seller's credibility in jeopardy!

It's either you or me.

Either the seller or the buyer closes every sale. Buyers probably close the majority of B2B sales. They tend to know what they want and aren't shy about demanding specific terms and conditions from their sellers. Therefore a B2B seller needs to take control of the sale, and direct the buyer to the close. Doing that takes courage, tact, patience, and a clear idea of what the outcome looks like. If you're going to lead a sale, then your follower (the buyer) should have a clear idea of the destination.

Conditions.

A conditional close is based on delivering specific terms and conditions in exchange for a commitment from the buyer. This is basic "horse trading" that assumes each party is willing to reciprocate to the other's satisfaction. A conditional close needs to have a solid foundation of trust between the buyer and seller. If either party is likely to go back on his/her commitment, then the close by definition simply falls apart. A conditional close also means that both parties have the means to deliver on their respective end of the deal. If there's any doubt about that, then steer clear of using this close!

Let's assume.

An assumptive close is based on the buyer and the seller agreeing that all the deal points have been addressed to everyone's satisfaction. This one takes a little longer because it requires the buyer and seller to see eye-to-eye on a significant list of terms and conditions of the sale. Being patient and persistent on each key point is essential. The good news is that as the agreed upon deal points add up, a "body of agreement" will be created. And that body makes the close a seamless outcome of the process. Assumptive closes also build better long-term relationships between buyers and sellers.

A question.

A close should be posed as a question, not a demand. Very few buyers like being pushed into a corner. Forcing a buyer to do something against his/her will typically has a bad outcome. Instead, asking the right question at the right time (that may have an obvious answer) is the better way to go. The buyer's response to the question will either give the seller a green light, or the opportunity to reboot the close and try again. If a "demand close" is attempted, and the answer is "no", it's game over. No sale and nothing left to be said—simply not a good thing!

Keep quiet.

Whenever the close occurs, the seller should stop talking! Once the buyer has made a commitment, it's time to stop selling. Far too often, salespeople feel the need to continue the conversation, which gives the buyer the opportunity to either change his/her mind about the deal or start asking for more concessions from the seller. As soon as the deal is closed, the seller should end the meeting or call, and promise to send a contract ASAP. Hanging around past that moment invites issues that can be avoided by simply wrapping things up.

Practice your closing skills as often as you practice your presenting and negotiating skills. Polishing all three skill sets are essential for long-term sales success!