

How to Push Prospects 'Off the Fence'

Once you know your clients' fear factors, you can find ways around them.

We've all heard it a thousand times: "I like what you're proposing, but I need a week to think it over."

And then the week turns into a month. And an army of advisors come on the scene. Accountants, lawyers, spouses, employees -- suddenly the would-be decision-maker can't make a move until a town hall is convened, a vote is held and the count is certified.

And all the while, you know the deal is going south. Those prospects are engaged in a delaying tactic, sitting squarely on the fence. Your challenge is to push them off. And I do mean "push," because the conventional approaches of coaxing, begging, pleading and cajoling don't work. In fact, they have the inverse effect. As you look weaker and more desperate, prospects become that much more determined to nail them to the fence.

"OK," you ask, "how do I accomplish this push without being overly aggressive?"

Well, you need to start by understanding that the prospect is refusing to make a decision because of one primary reason: fear. Your goal is to identify the fear, and then dismantle it.

The following are the top five fear factors and how to remove them as obstacles to your sale:

1. I'm spending money that I think I'm better off saving.

Response: You won't ever make money by saving it. I know you may be concerned about making a purchase at this time, but this isn't a purchase; it's an investment. If you believe it's a quality product or service, as you say you do, there's no reason not to invest now and reap the rewards going forward. Good investments start to pay dividends immediately. Why should you wait to start collecting returns?

2. There are far more attractive pricing options on the internet; I'd be overpaying if I accepted your terms.

Response: It's true that you get what you pay for. The online vendor you're contemplating likely has no direct service support, no history with you and your brands, you've never heard of them or they are not as well regarded as we are. Saving pennies now to give back dollars later never makes sense. By thinking this over endlessly, you're failing to put the asset you need or want into place. That means you're denying yourself personally by failing to arm your business with a competitive weapon, and you're acting as your own worst enemy.

3. My whole team is not onboard with the purchase. The final decision is mine, of course, but I want it to be a consensus.

Response: Consensus is just another word for a committee. You're right, you are the leader. The best way for leaders to lead

is to take action while others are paralyzed. I assure you, given the superiority of this product; once it's in place your team will appreciate your wisdom and foresight. In fact, I'm going to ask a fellow manager who purchased this from me to contact you and share his experience to date. He too faced resistance internally -- some people always say "no" -- but he forged ahead and now the decision is widely viewed as a game-changer.

4. What if a new model comes out shortly that makes this version obsolete or second best?

Response: I give you my word that we don't have any new models ready for market any time soon, nor do our competitors. What's more, when we do get ready to release a new version, you'll be among the first to know, and I will work with my company to offer you an attractive upgrade opportunity, if you so desire. You'll get the best of both worlds: our current state-of-the-art offering and a great trade-in deal as soon as a new version is available. There's no reason not to act now. You're protected.

5. This economy is so shaky; it doesn't seem to make sense to do anything until we have a clearer picture of the macroeconomics.

Response: One of the worst things you can do is allow macroeconomics to dictate how you do business. The world, the economy, is not going to collapse. It may stay weak for longer than we'd both like, but when the pie shrinks, the winners move proactively to claim a bigger piece of it. Those who sit in bunkers waiting for the dust to settle always fall behind those who took immediate action. (If the delayed purchase is for fun or personal use, remind the prospect that he can give in to fear or enjoy life

and buy what he loves. Point out that he's not being reckless in any way. The proposed investment is well within his means.)

Led by the rules of traditional selling, the tendency is to try to entice fence-sitters with sales, deals, special offers, etc., but I say no to that. Find the fear, and demonstrate through a firm rebuttal that the object of concern is really a paper tiger.

Great salespeople don't try to charm fence-sitters into action. They make it uncomfortable for them to keep stalling by forcing them to confront their fears.