

Special Management Series

The Ultimate Guide to Objection Handling: 40 Common Sales Objections & How to Respond

**This is a series of Training for your
Management TEAM**

Presented by J.W. Owens



**A Management
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Every prospect you speak to has sales objections, or reasons they're hesitant to buy your product. **Why are sales objections unavoidable?**

Because if the buyer didn't have reservations about your solution's price, value, relevance to their situation, or their purchasing ability, **they would have already bought it.**

To be successful, reps must learn how to both discover and resolve these objections.

What Is Objection Handling?

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- Objection handling is when a prospect presents a concern about the product/service a salesperson is selling, and the salesperson responds in a way that alleviates those concerns and allows the deal to move forward. Objections are generally around price, product fit, competitors, and good old-fashioned brush offs.
- Objection handling means responding to the buyer in a way that changes their mind or alleviate their concerns.
- Some reps argue with their prospects or try to pressure them into backing down -- but this isn't true objection handling. Prospects typically end up more convinced than ever of their position; worse, salespeople lose the trust and rapport they've built up.

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- Instead of telling your prospect they're wrong, **help them come to a different conclusion** of their own accord. And **if you can't persuade them, that's a good sign they're a poor fit.**
- It's also important to distinguish between sales objections and brush-offs.
- While **objections are authentic, brush-offs are excuses.**
- Think of an objection as, ***"I see the value in your product, but I'm not sure about buying it for X reason,"*** while a brush-off translates to, ***"I don't want to talk to you."***

Objections are far more serious than brush-offs.

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Why Is Objection Handling Important?

Nothing is more dangerous to a deal than letting sales objections go unaddressed until the final stages. The longer the buyer holds an opinion, the stronger that opinion usually is -- and the harder you'll have to fight to combat it.

With this in mind, **welcome objections rather than avoiding them.**

You can proactively identify them as well by periodically asking questions like:

- "Do you have any concerns around X?"
- "Are there any obstacles that would stop you from buying?"
- "How confident do you feel you'd see success from [product]? Why?"
- "You seem a little worried about X. What are your thoughts?"
- Overcoming Objections in Sales

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- According to Carew International and the Dimensions of Professional Selling sales training program. Use the **LAER model** to overcome objections in sales: **Listen, Acknowledge, Explore, and Respond.**
- **Avoid reacting impulsively to prospect objections.** Instead, listen to them, validate their concern, ask qualifying questions, and respond in a thoughtful way.
- Want to improve your sales objection handling technique? **First, use the LAER model: Listen, Acknowledge, Explore, Respond.**
- **Give your prospect a chance to talk,** then repeat a summary back to them. Next, try to dig into the underlying reasons for the objection.

(We'll cover specific ones for each objection below.)

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- Finally, **offer a neutral recommendation**. Because you listened to the buyer and explored their rationale rather than giving a knee-jerk response, they're usually willing to hear you out.
- **Keeping track of the objections you receive most often is also helpful**. Once you know what to expect, you can devote extra time to practicing and refining your responses.
- We also recommend sales reps **use role plays to boost their objection handling abilities**. Take turns with another rep on your team posing common objections (like any of the 40 on this list), answering, and then giving each other feedback.
- Now that you know **what objection handling is, why it's important, and how to improve**, let's dive into the 40 most common sales objections.

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Sales Objections About Price and Budget

1. "It's too expensive."

- Price objections are the most common type of objection, and are even voiced by prospects who have every intention of buying. Beware -- the moment you start focusing on price as a selling point, you reduce yourself to a transactional middleman. Instead, circle back to the product's value.

2. "There's no money."

- It could be that your prospect's business simply isn't big enough or generating enough cash right now to afford a product like yours. Track their growth and see how you can help your prospect get to a place where your offering would fit into their business.

3. "We don't have any budget left this year."

- A variation of the "no money" objection, what your prospect's telling you here is that they're having cash flow issues. But if there's a pressing problem, it needs to get solved eventually. Either help your prospect secure budget from executives to buy now, or arrange up a follow-up call for when they expect funding to return.

4. "We need to use that budget somewhere else."

- Prospects sometimes try to earmark resources for other uses. It's your job to make your product/service a priority that deserves budget allocation now. Share case studies of similar companies that have saved money, increased efficiency, or had a massive ROI with you.

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Sales Objections About Price and Budget

5. *"I don't want to get stuck in a contract."*

- A prospect with a genuine need and interest who balks at time-based contract terms is generally hesitant for cash flow reasons. Luckily for you, there are workarounds -- find out if you can offer month-by-month or quarter-by-quarter payment instead of asking for a year or more commitment up front.

Sales Objections About the Competition

6. *"We're already working with [Vendor X]."*

- A prospect who's working with a competitor is a blessing in disguise. They've already recognized a need and identified a solution, so much of the education you'd otherwise be responsible for has already been done. You can spend your time doing the one thing you'd have to hold off on with a prospect who hasn't recognized their pain yet -- talk about your product.
- Just because a prospect is working with a competitor doesn't mean they're happy with them. Probe into the relationship: Why did they choose this service? What's working well? What's not? Pay special attention to complaints that could be solved with your product.

7. *"I'm locked into a contract with a competitor."*

- Perhaps the easiest competitor-related objection to handle, this phrase is worded in a way that broadcasts your prospect's feeling of being trapped. See if you can come up with a creative discount to offset the cost of breaking a contract early, or demonstrate ROI that will make up for the sunk cost.
- Of course, your prospect could have simply chosen an overly negative turn of phrase. Ask them point-blank how the relationship is going to determine whether they're actually happy or are itching for a vendor switch.

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8. *"I can get a cheaper version of your product somewhere else."*

- Find out what you're dealing with here. Are you in a competitive situation, and the prospect is playing you against a competitor to drive up discounts? Or is your prospect under the impression that a similar, cheaper product can do everything they need?
- If it's the former, lay out your deepest discount and emphasize the features that make your product superior. Walk away if they ask you to go lower. In the second scenario, take advantage of the comparison. What are the points of differentiation that provide your prospect the most value? Play them up and emphasize overall worth, not cost.

9. *"I'm happy with [Competitor X]."*

- **What if your prospect is happy?** The same strategy still applies -- find out why they believe their relationship with your competitor is beneficial, and identify weak spots where your product could do better.

10. *"Competitor X says [false statement about your product]."*

- According to creator of Your Sales MBA® Jeff Hoffman, salespeople should respond with, ***"That's not true,"*** then pause.
- Hoffman says 90% of the time this reply will satisfy the buyer and they'll move on. You'll seem confident and collected, whereas your competitor will seem desperate and insecure. If your prospect is still unsure, they'll ask another question. At that point, you can provide more background, like so: ***"We manufacture our products in Canada, not Thailand. I have a map of our factories and distribution routes if you'd like to see it."***

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Sales Objections About Authority or Ability to Buy

11. *"I'm not authorized to sign off on this purchase."*

- No problem. Ask your prospect who for the name of the right person to speak to, and then redirect your call to them.

12. *"I can't sell this internally."*

- Well, your prospect might not be able to, but you can. After all, you sell your product every day. Ask your prospect what objections they anticipate, and help them prepare the business case for adopting your product. Check with Marketing to see if there's any collateral you can leverage on your prospect's behalf.

13. *"[Economic buyer] isn't convinced."*

- If you've already addressed objection #12 by providing internal selling advice and coaching and your prospect just can't hack it, it might be time to walk away. While it's heartrending to give up on a prospect who's on your side and just can't convince the higher-ups, it's also a waste of your time to keep butting heads with someone who will never see your product's value.

14. *"We're being downsized / bought out."*

- This happens rarely, but when it does there's usually nothing you can do. If there's no more company, there's no more deal. Wrap the relationship professionally so when your prospect finds a new gig, they'll be more likely to restart the conversation from a new company.

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15. *“There’s too much going on right now.”*

- Ask your prospect to define their competing priorities for you. If they can’t, it’s likely a brush-off and you should press them on precisely why they don’t want to engage with you.
- If they can provide concrete answers, don’t sweat it. Set a meeting time for a follow up and send over helpful resources in the meantime to stay on your prospect’s radar.

16. *“I’m part of a buying group.”*

- Buying groups enable independent companies to team up and make joint purchases from vendors -- usually getting a far better price than they’d be able to secure on their own.
- If your company isn’t on their list of approved suppliers, however, your prospect probably won’t be interested. After all, you can’t offer them the same discount for purchasing in bulk.
- Respond to this objection by delving into the details of their membership. Are there limits on who they can buy from? What price are they currently getting? Which companies belong to their buying coalition?
- When you’ve learned more, you can decide whether it makes economic sense for this prospect to work with you -- and if there’s an opportunity to become one of their buying group’s vendors.

Sales Objections About Need and Fit

17. *“I’ve never heard of your company.”*

- Treat this objection as a request for information. Don’t give an elevator pitch, but provide a very quick summary of your value proposition.
- For example:
- *“We’re a company that sells ad space on behalf of publishers like yourself. I’d love to speak with you about your revenue model and see if we can help.”*

18. *“We’re doing great in X area.”*

- If you hear this objection, do a little more qualification. What are your prospect’s goals? How much progress has been made?

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19. ***"We don't have that business pain."***

- This objection is often raised as a brush-off, or because prospects haven't realized they're experiencing a certain problem yet. And while ultimately you might discover they really don't need your product, don't take this objection at face value.

20. ***"X problem isn't important right now."***

- Sometimes, a simple *"Oh?"* will be enough for your prospect to start talking. Listen closely for real reasons the need has low priority versus platitudes. Keep in mind that excuses can be a sign that your prospect understands they have a problem and is trying to rationalize their inaction. Capitalize on this and instill a sense of urgency.

21. ***"I don't see what your product could do for me."***

- Another request for information packaged as an objection. Reconfirm the goals or challenges you've discussed and explain how your product can solve specific problems.

22. ***"I don't understand your product."***

- If your prospect literally can't wrap their head around your product, that's a bad sign. If your product is particularly complicated or specialized, it may be time to disqualify your prospect lest they churn two months from now.
- Don't give up immediately, though. Ask your prospect what aspects of your product they're unclear on, then try explaining it in a different way. Alternatively, bring in a technician or product engineer to answer questions out of your depth.

23. ***"I've heard complaints about you from [company]."***

- Word-of-mouth reviews are powerful, which can be both a blessing and a curse. Rather than immediately defending your solution, business, or brand -- which will only validate the criticism -- say something along the lines of, ***"Thanks for sharing that feedback with me. I'll pass it along to [relevant department]."***
- Then follow up with an offer to add value, such as, ***"While we're on the phone, would you be interested in hearing a few tips for improving your average invoicing turnaround time?"***
- This gives you an opportunity to establish credibility and trust with your prospect. Once you've given them a positive experience, they'll naturally form a high opinion of you.

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24. ***“We don’t have capacity to implement the product.”***

- This objection can be a deal-killing roadblock. Depending on what product you sell, it’s possible your prospect will have to add headcount or divert resources to fully take advantage of your offering, and if they truly aren’t able to, you might have to disqualify.
- Another tactic is to assess your prospect’s current duties and day-to-day to see what job responsibilities could potentially be eliminated or made easier by your product.

25) ***“Your product is too complicated.”***

- Find out if your prospect is confused about specific features or if the product is indeed over their head. If it’s the latter, you might have to disqualify. But if it’s the former, remind your prospect that they’ll have help from your customer service team should they choose to buy and that you’ll be on hand to answer any implementation questions they have.

26. ***“You don’t understand my challenges. I need help with Y, not X.”***

- It’s crucial to make your prospect feel heard. Restate your impression of their situation, then align with your prospect’s take and move forward from there. A lot of misunderstandings and hard feelings can be resolved simply by rephrasing your prospect’s words.

27. ***“You don’t understand my business.”***

- If you sell to a specific industry, chances are you do know a bit about your prospect’s business. Let them know that you have experience working with similar companies, and have solved similar problems in the past.
- If you simply made an incorrect assumption about your prospect’s company or industry, don’t be afraid to own up to it. Your prospects will appreciate your candor. Say, *“Sorry -- I assumed X was true, but it looks like that doesn’t apply to your business. Can you tell me a little more about X?”*

28. ***“Your product doesn’t have X feature, and we need it.”***

- Try suggesting a supplementary product that can be used in conjunction with yours. But if that specific need is a must-have and your product can’t solve it, your prospect might not be a good fit. Time to disqualify and move along to a better fit opportunity.

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29. *“We’re happy the way things are.”*

- Maybe everything really is going swimmingly. But more likely, your prospect is having some sort of challenge (after all, who isn’t?). Do some light qualification to determine if they’re facing any problems you can solve, then move forward or disqualify based on their answers.

30. *“I don’t see the potential for ROI.”*

- This is a sign that you’ll have to prepare a formal pitch for either your contact or her managers, either using internal numbers provided by your prospect or customer case studies. Nothing sells quite like hard numbers.

31. *“X is just a fad.”*

- You might hear this objection if your product pioneers a concept that’s new to your prospect’s industry. For example, social media is now widely accepted to be a necessary part of a sound business strategy, but seven years ago many would have scoffed at it.
- Now is the time to pull out any testimonials or customer case studies you have to prove ROI of your product. If you’re pioneering a new concept or practice, you’ll have to show that it works.

32. *“Your product doesn’t work with our current [tools, set-up].”*

- This objection can be a deal-breaker if the buyer is committed to their existing solutions. However, sometimes your product will replace these tools or make them obsolete. A workaround may be possible as well. To find out, ask these questions:
 - *“Which tools are you currently using?”*
 - *“How integral are those tools to your [strategy for X, department, individual responsibilities]?”*
 - *“What do those products help you accomplish?”*

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33. *“Your product sounds great, but I’m too swamped right now to handle [implementation, roll-out].”*
- Prospects are often put off by the effort required to switch products, even if the ROI is substantial.
 - To empathize with them, prove that you’re trustworthy, and ensure they do have the bandwidth, say, *“I understand. It typically takes our customers [X days/weeks] to get fully up and running with [your product].”*
 - Next, combat their reluctance to change by digging into the costs or pains of their current situation.
 - To give you an idea, you might ask, *“How many minutes do you spend every day [on X task]?”*
 - Then calculate what they stand to gain -- in time, efficiency, money, or all of the above.

Sales Objections that Are Actually Brush-Offs

34. *“*Click.*”*

- If your prospect hangs up on you, don’t sweat it -- it happens to everyone eventually. Try reaching out to a different person at the company using a different approach.
- Or you can go on the offensive. Wait a few seconds, then call back and say, **“Sorry, looks like we got disconnected! Do you have a few minutes?”**
- Which approach you choose is purely dependent on how your conversation with your prospect went before the hang-up.

35. *“I’m busy right now.”*

- Of course your prospect is busy -- almost every professional these days is. Simply explain that you’re not looking to give a full-blown conversation, just have a quick chat about whether or not a longer discussion about your product would be a good fit at their organization.

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36. *"I'm not interested."*

- During a prospecting call, it's far too early for a prospect to be able to definitively say they are or aren't interested in your product. Offer to send over some resources and schedule a follow-up call.

37. *"Just send me some information."*

- This is a great opportunity to segue into some qualification. Say, *"I'd be happy to send you some materials, but I want to make sure that they're relevant to you. What are you interested in learning about?"*

38. *"Call me back next quarter."*

- Prospects will often say this to dissuade you from pursuing a conversation. But don't let them off that easily -- it's a vague brush-off uttered in the hopes you'll fade away and disappear. Ask, *"What's going to change next quarter?"* to question their motivations for brushing you off.

39. *"How did you get my information?"*

- Hopefully, you're not pulling numbers from lists you got off the internet -- because if you are, your prospects have every reason to be annoyed. Don't get defensive -- simply remind the prospect that they filled out a form on your site, or signed up for more information at a trade show, or that you simply came across their website and wanted to reach out to see if you could help.

40. *"I hate you."*

- A disclaimer: Generally, prospects won't actually come right out and say this. And it's obviously not necessary to become best friends with someone to sell to them. But if you and your prospect really just don't get along, consider handing them off to a colleague lest your company lose the deal for good. The upside? This objection has nothing to do with your product or its value.

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Objections are an inevitable part of sales.

Some are legitimate reasons to disqualify, while others are simply an attempt to brush you off.

But as long as you're familiar with common objections and equipped to answer them, you'll be able to distinguish between prospects who have the potential to be good customers and prospects with whom you need to part ways.

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