



Subscribe to execubooks.com: e-summaries of books for business people

91 Mistakes Smart Salespeople Make

How to Turn Any Mistake into a Successful Sale

By Tim Connor

Published by Sourcebooks, 2006

ISBN 140220812X

Introduction

There are only two ways to sell more. Do less wrong or do more right. Imagine the results you could achieve if you did both.

Here are some examples of how to avoid deal-breaking mistakes and replace them with proven approaches that can help you break your sales records year after year.

MISTAKE: Lacking Clear Focus

Most sales winners are grateful for their blessings in life and focus on what they want, have and can do. By the same token, most losers focus on where they aren't, and what they can't do.

Losers complain that prices are too high, brochures aren't up-to-date and the territory is too small with too few prospects. Winners learn to work with what they have. They improvise, innovate, adjust and compromise — doing whatever it takes to get the job done with the available tools.

A key ingredient in all leaders, winners, effective people and productive and successful organizations is focus.

Turn it around: Focus on what you want, not what you don't have.

MISTAKE: Stopping Learning

One common denominator of successful salespeople is their willingness to invest in the continued improvement of their skills, attitudes and philoso-

phy. What did you invest in yourself last year? Not in your bank balance, home improvements, travel or daily maintenance, but in yourself?

Turn it around: Invest 10% of your time and money in self-improvement.

MISTAKE: Selling Only by the Numbers

For years, sales managers and sales trainers have been saying that selling is a “numbers” game: if you see enough qualified people, you'll make enough sales. It isn't just the number, however — focusing on the numbers alone will guarantee failure sooner or later, as the more people you see, the more you'll tend to see poor prospects. That will result in rejection, and the average salesperson can't handle the amount of rejection that comes with this philosophy. It's why so many people become discouraged and fail or quit.

See and call more prospects, but make sure they're qualified before you give them too much of your time and energy.

Turn it around: Prospecting isn't about how many people you see, but about the quality of the prospect.

MISTAKE: Being a Victim of Sales Cycles

Many salespeople believe they aren't in control of the sales cycle. But most sales cycles aren't

Buy the Full Book!

www.amazon.com www.bn.com www.chapters.ca

etched in stone. They're a function of your ability to get to the real issues, needs, pain and problems of your prospect. If you fail to identify those accurately, you'll most likely never create the sense of urgency necessary to close sales sooner rather than later.

Don't get into a mental rut that insists your sales cycle always has to be eight weeks, or six months, or seven days. However long you believe your sales cycle to be, you've undoubtedly closed sales in less time and more time. The point is that the cycle isn't a predetermined period of time. It's a function of your ability to identify critical prospect issues and then show the prospect how you can satisfy in a way that's acceptable.

Turn it around: Create a sense of urgency to control sales cycles.

MISTAKE: Thinking People Buy from People They Like

Some things have changed over the years in selling. People today have better, quicker and easier access to information about your products or services and those of your competitors. People want you to help them make better-informed decisions. There are fewer levels of management to go through to get to your decision-maker. People won't tolerate poor quality or poor service, but will do business with your competitors instead. They have an increasing number of options, choices and vendors from whom to purchase.

What hasn't changed is that people buy from people they trust. Stop trying to get people to like you. Get them to trust you.

Turn it around: Focus on establishing and building trust, not on being liked.

MISTAKE: Ignoring Past Clients

Lost business isn't necessarily lost forever. Many salespeople neglect this lucrative source of "new" business — business they can regain. Here's how to regain it:

- You must keep in touch with previous customers.
- You must learn the real reason why the customer left. Was it an issue of price, service, quality, distribution, arrogance or insufficient interest in keeping the business, or was it some other mistake?
- You have to be willing to begin again.
- You need to work as hard at keeping the business as you did at getting it.

Turn it around: Stay in touch with previous customers.

MISTAKE: Asking "Did You Get the Information I Sent?"

Too often salespeople fail to follow up. Or when they do follow up, they say something dumb like, "Did you get the literature I sent?"

This failure comes because they fear a "no" or a rejection, or believe the prospect is too busy to talk to them. Essentially, they sense they have a poor prospect anyway, so they figure, "Why bother?"

It's easy to fall into the no-follow-up trap. Here are a few ideas to consider when you next follow up a sales call:

- Don't begin with a closed-end question like, "Have you made your decision yet?" Instead ask, "Where are you in the decision-making process?"
- Don't ask, "Did you get the information I sent?" Instead ask, "What's your impression of the information I sent?"
- Don't ask, "When can we get together to discuss our next step?" Instead say, "Let's get together next Monday to ..."
- Don't ask, "Do you have any questions about the proposal?" Instead ask, "Is there anything in the proposal that would prevent us from getting this order started?"

Turn it around: Develop an effective follow-up strategy and use it.

MISTAKE: Not Practicing

How much time do you spend practicing and developing your skills? Do you practice a new technique for the first time on a prospect or do you try it out on a fellow

Enjoying this execuBook summary?



Ask us about buying the full book for yourself or your people

Contact execuGo Media Client Care

Toll Free: 1-866-888-1161
(9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. EST)

Email: clientcare@aheadspace.com

salesperson or your supervisor first? Do you not practice at all and just show up?

Any successful athlete spends more time practicing than performing. Olympic athletes spend more than 3,000 hours preparing for a two-, three- or 10-minute race. Most professional golfers hit hundreds of balls every day to refine their swing, balance and performance.

Are other careers different? No. Doctors, contractors, teachers and counselors spend time in research, discovery and experimentation. They don't wait until they get into the operating room or in front of a classroom.

Here's what you can practice before making a sales call or phone call:

- New questions to ask prospects.
- New ways to ask those questions.
- How to cover the benefits of a product or service feature.
- How to create a sense of urgency.
- How to terminate a presentation on a poor prospect in a professional manner.
- How to increase a sale by "up-selling."
- How to answer a prospect's questions more effectively.

Turn it around: Practice new techniques on a fellow salesperson.

MISTAKE: Not Asking Elevator Questions

Tim Connor recently met a prospect on an elevator in a Las Vegas hotel while on a speaking engagement. He looked like a businessperson so Connor asked, "What do you do for a living?" He replied that he was in the insurance industry and Connor quickly followed up with, "What do you do in the insurance business?" The answer was that he was the president of his company.

Then came Connor's elevator question: "Do you know what your lost sales are costing you every year?" The prospect paused, and then answered, "I'm not sure. What do you do for a living?" That led to Connor's elevator statement: "I'm in the business of helping organizations reduce their lost sales revenue."

An elevator question is any question that cuts to the heart of your prospect's challenges, concerns or fears to make them think. It's a question that implies you or your organization may have a possible solution for their problems. Remember that elevator questions

aren't only used on elevators, but can be used at social settings, while selling on the phone or anywhere in the sales process. Great salespeople are masters of elevator questions.

Turn it around: Develop several urgency-building, probing elevator questions.

MISTAKE: Failing to Build Psychological Debt

Early in his career, Tim Connor kept being told how good he was at sales. But he wasn't pulling in the orders. Then a mentor asked him, "Tim, when you give a sales presentation to a prospect, are you nice to them? Do you give them your time? Do you educate them? Do you give them the benefit of your experience?" The answer to all those questions was yes.

"Here's what's happening," his mentor continued. "You're building a psychological debt. They owe you, and the way they pay off the debt is with a compliment. Once you accept the compliment, the debt is paid." And no order results.

The mentor said to get orders, Connor needed to refuse the compliments. When that happened, the debt would remain. "Say something to your prospects like, 'If I were that good, we'd be doing business together.' Or, 'If I'm going to be successful, I need to be better able to communicate the benefits of my proposal to you. I'm sorry, but I don't deserve that compliment.'"

But when he got an order and a compliment, the advice was to say, "Thank you." The debt would have been repaid properly.

Don't let your prospect off the psychological hook too easily. What you want and need is business,

simple

smart

aheadspace.com

Share a headspace with the best minds
in business

See page 4 for details

not validation, approval, acceptance or appreciation.

Turn it around: Create psychological debt through service.

MISTAKE: Selling Everyone the Same

One of the keys to effective selling is to sell your prospects the way they're comfortable buying, not the way you're comfortable selling.

There are four major types of buyers:

1. Those who want quick answers and the bottom line.
2. Those who want lots of details, information and accuracy.
3. Those who want to create a relationship with you and get to know you.
4. Those who want to make buying a social event and want to have fun.

Each of those four types of buyers must be approached from their perspective and comfort zone. To give a ton of information on features and benefits to a prospect who wants only the bottom line will surely put you back on the street without a sale. To expect a fast decision — waltz in, give your presentation, waltz out — with the relationship buyer will earn contempt and distrust. The secret, and it really isn't a secret at all, is to have four — that's right, *four* — distinct selling styles, vocabularies, approaches and presentations.

Your prospects will tell you what you need to tell them to sell them, but you must discover their buying styles before you launch your presentation. Not only must you present differently to the four, but you must also close them, service them, negotiate with them and treat them uniquely.

Turn it around: Customize your sales message and approach.

Conclusion

The role of the sales professional will continue to undergo transformation, but the fundamental mission

will remain intact. By avoiding the common mistakes even smart salespeople make, you'll improve your sales record. **e**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Tim Connor has been a full-time speaker and trainer for over 30 years.

Related Reading

Questions That Sell: The Powerful Process for Discovering What Your Customer Really Wants, by Paul Chery, Amacom, 2006, ISBN 0814473393.

Championship Selling: A Blueprint for Winning with Today's Customer, by Tom Blake, Tom Hodson and Tony Enrico, John Wiley & Sons, 2005, ISBN 047083675X.

The 24 Sales Traps and How to Avoid Them: Recognizing the Pitfalls That Misperform Even the Best Performers, by Dick Canada, Amacom, 2001, ISBN 0814471412.

Need a Competitive Edge?

Share a headspace with the best minds in business — visit aheadspace.com. Now you can learn, teach and inspire your people with a complete collection of resources and tools. These simple, smart, enterprise-wide learning solutions enable 100% of an organization's employees to quickly learn and apply the world's best business concepts at an unbeatable return on investment.

The resources include two of execuGo Media's most popular product lines — execuBooks business book summaries and execuKits turnkey workshop toolkits — plus innovative inspirational tools called execuClips. They enable all employees to build competitive advantage by equipping each other with a world-class business education easily and effectively right where they work.

To learn more, visit www.aheadspace.com or contact us at clientcare@execugo.com or 1-866-888-1161.