

Sales Closing Mistakes That'll Stop a Deal in Its Tracks

Mistakes to avoid if you hope to be a successful salesperson.



A free marketing resource from

Inbound 281

inbound281.com


Inbound 281
MARKET YOUR WAY UP

Avoid These Closing Mistakes

Ask any sales rep what the hardest part of their job is, and I'll bet they'll say "closing."

After all, signing new customers and upselling existing accounts is how a rep makes quota. If they're not getting prospects to sign contracts, they're not going to hit their number.

We've put together this list of common mistakes sales people need to avoid if they hope to be successful.

We hope you find this information helpful. If you have any questions, feel free to reach me at 800-834-4910 or at inbound281.com.

Mark Parent

Mark Parent,
President & CEO
mparent@inbound281.com



17 Sales Closing Mistakes That'll Stop a Deal in Its Tracks

Source credit: HubSpot.com. Jeff Hoffman @mjhoffman. <https://blog.hubspot.com/sales/sales-closing-mistakes>

Ask any sales rep what the hardest part of their job is, and I'll bet they'll say "closing." After all, signing new customers and upselling existing accounts is how a rep makes quota. If they're not getting prospects to sign contracts, they're not going to hit their number. There are a handful of mistakes you need to avoid if you hope to be successful. Here are 17 of the most prevalent -- and devastating -- closing fumbles I see reps make.

17 Sales Closing Mistakes to Stop Making Right Now

1. Closing only once

You should consistently "close" throughout the sales process for three reasons: First, you'll gradually secure greater and greater buy in from your prospect; second, you'll filter out tire kickers; and third, you'll get key information, meetings, introductions, and more.

For example, on your first call you might ask for the buyer's cell phone number. Being able to call or text them directly (rather than going through their assistant or calling their work line) will make them much easier to contact.

At the end of the third meeting, you could ask them to connect you with procurement so you can start learning about their purchasing requirements. Not only will you have a head start over other vendors, you'll seem more prepared and experienced.

2. Not asking for what you want

Clearly stating your ask might be common sense, but it's hardly common practice.

There are two reasons reps don't simply state what they want from a prospect. It's possible they're afraid of rejection, so they soften their language to minimize the chances of hearing "no."

On the other hand, it's possible they don't know what they want! Too often, reps go into a call or meeting with no real concept of what they're hoping to get out of it. And if you don't know what you want, how can you get it from the prospect?

Enter every interaction with a clear objective in mind, and don't beat around the bush when asking for it. For example, "I'm calling to see if you have questions about the proposal" doesn't make it clear what you want the prospect to do. "Will you be signing and sending the proposal today?" does.

3. Using statements instead of questions

Closes should always be phrased as questions, not statements. Why? Because questions require direct answers, and statements do not.

If a sales rep says to a prospect, "It would be great to meet on Monday afternoon," that prospect can respond in a multitude of ways. But if the rep says, "Can you meet on Monday afternoon?" the prospect has only two possible replies at their disposal -- "Yes, I can," or "No, I can't."

Sentences that start with "I'd like to" or "Maybe we can" aren't closes. Questions that start with "Are you," "Can you," or "Will you" are.

4. Not creating a sense of urgency

Purchasing decisions are driven by two things: Need and timing. If a need is great but other priorities are more important, your deal will get pushed. If a need is great but the prospect doesn't understand why they need to address it right now, your deal will also get pushed.

Identifying pain isn't enough to close a deal. You have to create the right timing as well, and that means creating a sense of urgency. Explaining to your prospect not only why they should act but why they should also act now is the only way to close a deal.

5. Adding commentary

Silence can be uncomfortable, but it's golden when closing. Unfortunately, reps often rush to comment on their prospects' responses immediately after they've been uttered.

Here's what this sounds like:

Rep: "Can you meet this afternoon?"

Prospect: "No, I'm busy."

Rep: "Not a problem -- how's tomorrow?"

However, if the rep simply falls silent after the prospect responds, the prospect often answers the rep's follow up question before it's even spoken.

Here's the above example, revised to use this approach:

Rep: "Can you meet this afternoon?"

Prospect: "No, I'm busy."

[silence]

Prospect: " ... But I can meet next Tuesday."

Don't get in your own way by jumping to fill the silence.

6. Not knowing the prospect's decision criteria

Asking for the business is a way to signal to prospects that the end of the sales process has arrived. Of course, you also need to be aware when it's time to ask for it. Asking too soon makes the prospect feel rushed, while asking too late will make the deal last longer than it has to.

At the beginning of every sales process, make sure you find out what specific criteria the decision maker needs to make a purchase. Do they need the vendor to follow a certain review or legal process? Do they need a specific set of features or a specific business case to be built? Find out these criteria and fulfill them methodically so a natural endpoint becomes obvious.

7. Not understanding the prospect's purchasing process

Understanding the purchasing process is a similar, but slightly different requirement than the one above.

Some companies require a legal review or formal procurement process to get a deal done. Others are required to evaluate a certain number of vendors. Still others will have specific requirements for payment terms or types. Know this process before formal negotiations start, so that you won't get through the entire closing sequence only to have to go through a weeks-long review process before the deal can be signed.

8. Closing before everyone is at the table

Negotiating with the wrong people is a waste of time. They won't be able to tell you whether a decision can be made or what it will be. Bring in all necessary stakeholders and have them up to speed on the your progress thus far before you start talking about pricing and terms.

9. Closing people who can't deliver

Why pose an ask to someone who can't give you what you're asking for? It's not a good approach, and yet, I see this happen all the time. A classic example is asking for a referral from someone who obviously cannot provide it. An entry-level engineer can introduce you to their coworkers and their direct manager. But the CEO? Probably not. Don't ask a contact to commit to or give you something they can't provide.

10. Attempting to close someone through a third party

I most often see this mistake crop up with senior-level decision makers. Let's say a rep would like to assemble all the relevant stakeholders they'd need for a deal to be approved, and they want to know who should be on the meeting list. If the rep can't get through to the CEO, they might pose their ask to their assistant like so: "Who do you think your boss would recommend to be there?"

With this question, you're asking the assistant to deliver what you want on behalf of their boss. Not a good idea. While it's fine to pose your close to the assistant or a third party, make sure you're closing that person directly. With this in mind, the above question becomes "Who do you recommend should be there?"

Close the person you're talking to, not that person on behalf of someone else. The latter approach is a recipe for misunderstandings.

11. Using underhanded closing tricks

You should have run a straightforward and honest sales process up to this point, so why stop now?

Too many salespeople fall back on tricks and techniques designed to persuade their prospect into closing before they're necessarily ready to. The problem with those tricks is that they're completely transparent, put unnecessary pressure on buyers, and don't work that well.

Keep your behavior above board throughout the sales process, unless you want to leave your buyer with a bad taste in their mouth at the eleventh hour.

12. Closing too early

Just as you wouldn't pitch your product (I hope) on the first call, you shouldn't go for a final close when you're only halfway through discovery. The sales cycle can and should be sped up if it's possible to do so without cutting corners, but often you'll need to follow each step and work on the buyer's timeline to get a deal signed. Trying to force a sale over the finish line when you've only completed a few of these steps will prematurely end a deal you could have eventually won.

13. Not understanding their bottom line

Making a sale isn't the end-all, be-all. The deal has to be mutually beneficial to both parties, and that means not compromising on price or payment terms to a point where you're harming your company. Be accommodating where you can and help your buyer out if they're genuinely willing to commit to a purchase, but don't agree to terms that are so far from your company's bottom line that you'd be better off walking away.

14. Stepping on the close

On that note, don't step on the close. A rep steps on their close when they immediately tack the word "or" or "and" to the end of their closing question. Instead of asking the prospect "Would you be able to meet tomorrow?" and letting the question hang, reps often hastily tack on an additional phrase, such as "Or are you available next week?"

Keep in mind that words such as “and” and “or” add choices to a conversation, when closing is about eliminating choices and pushing the prospect toward a simple “yes” or “no” answer. By adding an additional clause, you increase the possibility you’ll get a muddled or half response.

15. Talking too much

At the negotiation table, silence is your best friend. Salespeople routinely talk themselves out of a deal: Their prospect is fully bought-in and ready to discuss specific terms, but the rep gets so excited that they keep going ... and going ... and going ... They accidentally introduce doubt into the buyer's mind. Poof. That's the sound of money disappearing.

If you tend to be a chatty closer, remember this: No one ever listened their way out of a deal. Every time you finish introducing a new term, responding to a question, offering a concession, or most importantly, stating your price, you should shut up. And when your prospect says, “Sounds great, I think we're ready to move forward,” wrap up the conversation and end the meeting.

16. Persisting when the prospect says no

If your prospect turns you down, the worst response is arguing with them. That sends a clear signal: You aren't confident enough to accept their "no." They'll lose faith in you -- not to mention your rapport will suffer.

So, what should you do? Just say "okay." If another alternative makes sense, you can offer that one; for example, maybe they didn't want to connect you with procurement because they think it's too early, so you respond, "I understand. Is there someone else within the organization familiar with your buying criteria who may be able to give me similar insight?"

Showing you can calmly get a "no" without becoming irritated, pushy, or insecure will raise your status in the buyer's eyes and increase the odds next time you'll get a "yes."

17. Trying to make closing easy for the prospect

Reps often ascribe to the thinking that closing needs to be easy for the prospect, but that's wrong. By definition, closing requires the salesperson to put the prospect in a mild state of discomfort.

If buyers don't feel a slight amount of pressure, they're not going to make a choice. And "no decisions" are always worse than closed-won or even closed-lost. Don't be afraid to turn up the heat a few notches to get an answer.

Closing is tough, but by avoiding these missteps and sticking to a confident, concise, and "always-be-closing" mindset will set you up for success.

About Inbound 281



A Growth Agency

Inbound 281 is a full-service, growth-focused digital marketing agency. We help businesses grow by improving their marketing to increase sales, revenue and profits.

We help owners, marketers and sales managers who are looking for new ideas to help sales hit their targets. Often times they are frustrated that, after all the time, efforts and money they have invested, they're still not getting the results they were expecting.

Our sights are set on lead acquisition, lead conversion, and conversion rate optimization. We specialize in multi-channel digital marketing, including content marketing, web design and development, SEO, pay per click, and social media.

Ready for a Conversation?

What's your dream result? Let's get the digital marketing conversation started!

Looking for new customer acquisition, lead generation, client engagement or a competitive advantage? We're ready to learn more about your goals so we can help you build a Marketing Road Map to help you achieve your goals.

[Schedule a Conversation](#)

Inbound 281
2155 Butterfield Dr., Troy, MI 48084
800-834-4910
www.inbound281.com