



Handling Objections

By

Tracy Bedwell

Managing Director

Sales Training International Ltd

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During the sales process most people will raise objections. Objections are raised for many reasons. At some stage, customers

- misunderstand something you have said
- feel pressurised
- are not convinced about your claims
- haven't yet made up their mind
- have misunderstood something
- have to go back and justify their buying decision to others

One of the most common times objections are raised is just before the decision to purchase. In this case the customer is often looking for reassurance that the decision to buy is the right one.

There are different emotions that come into play when a customer raises an objection depending on what the objection is and how it is raised. We can feel:

- frustrated
- angry
- confused
- irritated
- worried
- frightened

And this can lead to us losing control.

Most salespeople when faced with an objection tend to react too quickly. Because we have heard the objection before, in our enthusiasm to help the customer, we interrupt and often deal with the objection, in effect, by making a statement that effectively says the customer is wrong.

The customer says we are a bit expensive and our reaction is to say in effect *"No we're not and I can prove it"*

This is a bad tactic since none of us like to be wrong and all of us hate to be proved wrong. This method, therefore, of responding to an objection with a statement of fact is unwise since it puts the customer in the wrong frame of mind.

Rather than attacking our customer's beliefs or opinions we should try to get them on our side. The golden rule should be that, whatever the objection, you should never openly contradict a customer. It may be that the customer has misunderstood something you have said previously or maybe feels it is his or her duty to question some of your claims about your product or service in order to test their validity

Whatever the objection and whatever the circumstances the least powerful way to answer a sales objection is with a statement of fact.

There is a simple process that can be used to answer any sales objection.

1. Listen to the objection.
2. Clarify the objection.
3. Deal with the objection.
4. Advance the sale.

1. Listen to the objection

Resist the temptation of interrupting the customer. You may have heard the objection a hundred times before but not from this particular customer. It may also be that the customer has more than one objection, or that this particular objection is slightly different than the ones you usually hear.

By listening you show the customer you are interested in his or her problems and enhance your own professionalism. It also gives you time to think of a way of answering the objection.

2. Clarify the objection

It is very easy in the heat of the moment to mishear what your customer has said and begin to answer the wrong objection.

So, for example, when the customer says you are too expensive it can mean different things. The customer could mean:

*I've had another quote
I'm checking you out
I'm negotiating with you
I have to go back and convince others
It's more than I expected
It's more than I have in my budget
I don't want to buy from you*

It could also be that when you test your understanding of the objection you find that your customer has another objection that is fairly trivial and can be handled with ease.

To clarify the objection you could say something like:

"When you say we are a little expensive, can you be more specific?"

We then need to probe and find out the real reasons behind the objection, before moving to the next stage. It could be that by the end of this stage of the process you identify, for example, they have had a slightly cheaper quote from a competitor. Once you have enough information it is now time to deal with the objection.

3. Deal with the objection.

Once you fully understand the nature of the objection then it can be answered in different ways depending on whether it is

- a misunderstanding by the customer
- disbelief over claims you are making
- a product disadvantage

Misunderstanding.

Where the objection is based on a misunderstanding of something you have said then you must:

- take responsibility for the misunderstanding
- give information to clarify the true position
- gain agreement to proceed

For example the customer says:

I don't wish to see anyone from your company as I am working full-time and can't afford to take time off work during the day.

The customer has clearly misunderstood the fact that someone will be available to call outside normal office hours.

I obviously haven't made myself clear Mr Smith. I will be pleased to call at any time in the evening to suit yourself. I will actually be in your area on Thursday. Would 7.30 be convenient or would you prefer a slightly earlier time.

Disbelief.

This occurs where you have made a statement and the customer does not believe you, or at least doubts some of the claims you have made.

For example:

I think you are too expensive

To answer this and other types of objection there is a method called Feel, Felt, Found, which is very effective for dealing with objections without attacking your customer. Let's use the previous example. After clarifying, we could say:

I understand how you feel Mrs Smith. Other people have felt exactly the same. People in the same business as yourself who are now our customers. When we first made contact there were often other companies who were able to provide quotes that were a little bit cheaper than ours.

However, what they found was that because we have invested heavily in new technology and are able to guarantee a 3 hour response to any problems that may occur during implementation, it was very much more cost effective in the longer term to pay a little bit more up front.

Product Disadvantage.

This occurs where there is a feature of your product or service that is genuinely less advantageous than a feature of a competitor's product or service. For example, the customer could say: *We use a local company with an office in the high street.*

There is a disadvantage here because you don't have a similar office in this location and is a genuine disadvantage, which needs to be put in perspective.

We try to overcome the disadvantage by stating the advantages of dealing with your company, in the hope that the advantages will outweigh any disadvantages.

This is often called the 'Balance Sheet Method'. To do this successfully you need to be aware of your main selling points and the services you can provide that are superior to those provided by others.

However, before we deal with the objection we need to clarify why having a local office is important to the customer and whether other parts of our service might outweigh the disadvantage that has been identified.

4. Advance the sale.

The key to objection handling is to react less quickly when an objection is raised and find out more about the problem. Clarify exactly what the problem is then try to overcome the objection.

Finally, if you have dealt with the objection successfully and it is the right time, close the sale, or move on the next stage of the sales process.