



[Business Builders]

Sales

No more pity parties! How to get back to selling

by Dawn Wagenaar

IT'S TIME for a pep talk, salespeople. You may feel washed up, stressed out and done in. But it's not over until the prospect bans you from the premises.

Well, don't get banned from a company. Just don't give up as the market starts showing signs of life. Prospects don't attend sales team pity parties. Some of them are attending their own pity parties, so they need hope from a happy camper like you that business continues somewhere.

Here's how to get your sparkle back even if your prospects are less than enthusiastic.

"We don't have any money! Now go away!"

Have you heard this before? It's not fun, but don't take it personally. The gatekeeper may have a budget, but is guarding it carefully. Only those products and services that prove to enhance the bottom line will be considered.

When contacting prospects, make sure that you clearly understand and can clearly communicate the value that you will bring. Your mindset cannot be on the close or even overcoming objections, but on the assistance you could provide these people to make their job easier or make them look good.

Leverage your interpersonal strengths such as empathy or responsibility to turn any grouchy response to your advantage. Win them over with the belief that you can make their day instead of ruin it.

"What's in it for me?"

You might contact your prospects with the idea of getting something for yourself, or you can work to discover their need or pain. Great salespeople add value beyond the product or service. Any small favor can turn the tide on a lukewarm lead. It's the difference that transforms you from a salesperson to a trusted adviser.

Your company may have nixed season tickets or gift cards. However, can you still send a qualified referral or make a restaurant recommendation? Sometimes the simple things like a handwritten thank you card or sympathy card keeps you top of mind when people are ready to deal.

Whereas years ago prospects may have engaged after four to six separate contacts, it may now take 12 to 15 "touches" to convert them to clients. That's when the economy is good. Don't get discouraged if a seemingly hot lead keeps putting you off or pushing a deadline. You must either convince them of the urgency or keep sending sweet nothings their way. Court them. Woo them.

"I'm not sure I like your tone."

Despite all your best efforts, some people may not like you. It's okay. It happens to everyone. Not every lead is right for your company. These experiences happen either to keep you humble or to teach you a better sales approach.

Perform a 360-degree analysis on what you should keep doing, what you should do even more, and what you should stop doing at all costs. Maybe the disconnect is you; maybe not.

Maybe there is no disconnect. Maybe it's just bad timing. Persistence and politeness will pay dividends over self-pity and revenge. Before you spray paint the dude's car, take a deep breath and schedule a followup call in a few days — or a few months.

"We're in transition."

This can mean that they really are in transition or they have a mandated budget freeze. Owner and leadership transitions, eliminated departments, relocations and budget reviews will impact the speed of

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purchasing decisions. Demonstrate empathy for the internal chaos or change that the prospect is experiencing and try to understand the issues before launching your sales pitch.

Ask when they might be in a position to consider service or product alternatives and who will be the decision maker. Once you understand the constraints, consider ways to support the transition through a referral or other resources.

“We like our current provider.”

This is a tricky one. One of the common denominators of overturning this objection is to find out if you can do everything the current provider is doing — cheaper. If prospects have a good relationship and believe they are getting good value with another company, they are reluctant to investigate a switch unless it will somehow serve their bottom line.

You can sometimes get a foot in the door by identifying and offering an introductory product or service as a test drive. This gives you and the prospect a chance to try each other out before fully committing to a business relationship.

“Let’s meet and talk about it.”

Never underestimate the power of first impression. Whether you are responding to a request for proposal or cold calling, an invitation to meet in person should be viewed as a “play date” to see if you are compatible with the prospect’s personality, expectations and culture. Be prepared to wow them.

Avoid launching straight into sales talk. Do your homework about the prospect and have some conversation handy to build rapport and prove that you are the real deal. If you must rehash many of the same things you’ve already presented by phone or e-mail, act as though it’s the first time you’ve ever talked to the person about your oh-so-interesting key points! Show genuine enthusiasm for the meeting and offer three or four key points about how you can serve their needs.

In reality, there are lots of people who want to buy from you. You are good enough and smart enough. You’re no quitter. End of pep talk. Go get ‘em.

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