

How to Effectively Close the Sale

Types of closes

There are scores of different closes in selling and hundred of variations. This list features a few of the most commonly used in our industry.

1. **Summary close:**

You summarize all of the features and benefits you have presented, getting agreement on each of them. It is important to summarize more strongly the particular benefits the prospect finds most attractive. You end the summary by asking for the order, "Joe, I really want to do business with you. Would you please okay this agreement (not "sign this order") so we can get moving right away?"

2. **The alternate close:**

"Do you like the shipment all at one time or would you prefer that we spread it over several months?" Give the buyer a choice between two options, rather than making him say "yes" or "no."

3. **Assume the sale:**

If you feel the buyer is pretty receptive, assume the sale has been made. Ask, "How soon must you have this?"

4. **Do something to enhance the close:**

Set in motion an action that the buyer will have to stop you from doing to stop the sale. Write up the order, or do something that gets the ball rolling. This is a good technique to use with the person who has difficulty making up his mind.

5. **The little decision close:**

Some people have problems making big decisions, so give them a series of little decisions to make. Once they've said enough little "yeses," they're not likely to say a big "no."

6. **The buy now or suffer close:**

I'm sure you know that inflation is pushing prices higher and higher. By ordering today, you can pin down a price that may be a substantial saving to you..." Guaranteeing delivery schedules and other previews of "coming events" can also be used to close the sale now.

7. The “bring your own witness” close:

Tell success stories which show how your products have worked well for others. This is a powerful close, but it can backfire on you if your buyer is a strong individualist. Know your customer!

8. Give the prospect something to do:

Sometimes it helps to give the buyer an order blank early in the presentation and suggest he use it as a “worksheet.” Later you can ask him to okay it as an order.

9. The ask and ye shall receive close:

Simply ask for the order. Don’t beg, just ask! “Mr. Smith, I’m ready to commit myself and my company to do everything I’ve promised you. Can we do business?” Some sales managers frown on this bold method, but, on some prospects it works like a charm. It works best on the guy who likes to seal agreements with a handshake.

10. The pre-date close:

If all else fails and you simply cannot get the order today, try to pin down a specific time - in writing - when the order will be forthcoming. Arrange to come back and pick it up. Set a definite appointment! It’s at least a little better than nothing.

11. The something for nothing close:

When available, a premium or “sweetener” can close the deal. Too many salespeople weaken the power of this strong closing technique by pulling it out too early. It works best as an added incentive when the buyer is almost ready to buy and needs to be “pushed over the edge.” The product must be sold on its own merit! The “sweetener” is only “extra ammunition” to give immediacy to the close. If you don’t need the premium to get the order, use it as a token of appreciation - after the sale has been made.

12. The Columbo close:

This is a “bottom of the barrel” tactic, but it might salvage one out of a hundred sales for you. You want to make the sale, you know they are going to do something, but you just can’t figure out why they won’t do business with you - so you:

- a. Close your briefcase.

- b. Shake hands and start to leave.
- c. As you reach the door, you turn to the prospect and say, “I wonder if you would do me a favor? I’m a little puzzled. You’re not going to buy our products and, don’t be alarmed, I accept your decision. But I would really appreciate it if you would tell me what I did wrong.”
- d. If the real objection pops up, go right back to selling.

Five things to remember about closing

1. You close first in your own mind! Believe that the prospect is going to buy and you can convince him to buy.
2. Always close to the customer’s major point of interest. It’s his weakest point of resistance.
3. Close early and often. Use several types of closes - including one for good measure.
4. Learn to “feel” the customer’s reactions. It’s like when you kiss your spouse - if it’s “right”, you’ll both know it!
5. Don’t get locked in on a set approach. Tailor each close to the customer, the situation, and the theme of the presentation.

Seal the order with a compliment

“Mr. Smith, I think you have made a very wise decision because...”

That sentence can do wonders to reassure the customer who’s not sure he’s doing the right thing. It can cement the relationship you have established and help in future contacts. If you are really convincing with it, it can help you avoid cancellations by the kind of buyer who has second thoughts the next day or week. Finally, it reaffirms that the decision is his - not yours. People like to feel that they make their own decisions. Give them their dignity and a feeling of independence.

The do's and don'ts of closing

Do's

1. Do present a friendly and sincere manner at the close, even if you've had a disagreement earlier in the presentation.
2. Do have all the necessary materials for the close.
3. Do put the order blank in full view before you try to close. Do it without attracting attention.
4. Do handle third party interruptions tactfully.
5. Do learn how to communicate well - make sure you are understood.
6. Do try to demonstrate as much as possible - seeing is believing.
7. Do thank your customers!
8. Do give strong, compelling reasons for buying now rather than later.
9. Do leave on an upbeat, optimistic note, even when you know that the prospect isn't going to buy. Restate your confidence in your products and say that on your next visit you'll show them how others have found it to be a profitable investment. This shows that you don't consider yourself beaten and that you'll be back to try again.

Don'ts

1. Don't beg for the sale; it puts you and the prospect in an awkward position.
2. Don't ask the prospect to "sign" the order blank - ask to "approve" or "OK" it instead.
3. Don't let the prospect know how much the sale means to you financially.
4. Don't be apologetic about your presentation or prices.
5. Don't make promises you know you can't keep.
6. Don't let closing procedures become too formal - aim for a relaxed atmosphere.
7. Don't miss the opportunity to show prospects you expected them to buy.

8. Don't make it easy for the prospect to refuse.
9. Don't overtalk - get the customer's reaction. Know when to stop talking.
10. Don't confuse the prospect with too many facts, figures or samples.
11. Don't overlook the obvious - give people what they want.
12. Don't fail to suggest action - that's your job - you suggest the close.
13. Don't give up! Persevere - try and try again.
14. Don't linger any longer than necessary.
15. Don't be too obviously overjoyed when you receive an order - it's unprofessional.

Reasons for not closing a sale

If you've ever come away from a presentation empty-handed, maybe the reason lies with the answer to one of these questions.

1. Did you inadvertently use condescending language?
2. Were you at peak personal efficiency or were you tired?
3. Did you try to hold the prospect when he/she had something else to do?
4. Did you try to give good reasons for immediate action?
5. Were you able to convince the prospect that your products were the best solution to his/her biggest problem?
6. Did the prospect have specific objections that you did not clearly answer?
7. Did you overlook the most important benefit to your prospect when you made your presentation?
8. Were you critical of your prospect's choice of competitive products, thereby reflecting on his judgment?