

Essential Sales Skills: Mini Steps to Closing-A-Sale Success

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In a sense, the close is the most crucial part of any sales situation — it's the big "ta-da!" to your sales efforts. And it's the payoff for all the work you've done to build a relationship with your customer, understand his needs, and find a solution that is right for this individual client.

If you understand — and use — a certain set of steps for your closing, the big "ta-da!" becomes a natural segue to success. As a salesperson, you'll be in a much better position to assume (not *if* but *when*) your customer will commit.

Making the Mini-Close

There is a lot riding on your close, but closing can actually be easy if you break it down into "mini-closes" that you do each time you meet or talk with your customer. Think of each mini-close as a chance to take the pulse of your customer and move her incrementally through the pipeline of commitment to your services.

Remember that every contact with your client is an opportunity to ask questions about her objectives, allowing you to formulate an individualized plan of action for her. Use mini-closes as a series of effective steps in making the most of your sales appointments and not sabotaging yourself when it comes time for the final close.

Overcoming Your Fears and Staying Flexible

No one can manage your fear of rejection or failure except you. The keys to beating these feelings are:

- *being prepared and scripted*
- *visualizing the outcome you want*
- *articulating the outcome*

Face any fears head-on. Decide what's the maximum you will ask for, the minimum you will accept — and the middle point. If you're prepared for any situation, you will also be prepared to offer a response.

Maybe you will need to adjust the original solution and meet the client halfway, such as taking out one element of the package to meet your customer's price requirements. Just remember, be calm, be prepared, and be sensitive to issues that come up during the close.

8 Top Tips for Closing a Sale

1. *Know your customer* and his motivation to buy. People buy for personal reasons and justify the purchase for task or business reasons. Figure out what is driving your customer and use a closing style that matches the way he makes decisions (analytical vs. emotional, detailed vs. big picture).

2. *Be prepared.* Come with the proper paperwork and answers to detail questions, payment information, and so on. Identify and help the customer make small decisions on the way to the sale (starting dates, staffing needs, etc.). It makes the close easier and less stressful for both of you.
3. *Earn your customer's trust* and demonstrate you are interested in his best interests, not simply your own bottom line. Customers can smell a phony a mile away (and won't even let you get this far). Be ready to show a cost analysis, pros and cons, and the ROT potential of his decision to go with your program.
4. *Avoid selling overkill.* Sell what the person needs (you can up-sell later as her needs change and grow). Stick to the solution that suits her best.
5. *Watch and listen for verbal and non-verbal clues* that the client is ready to commit. Are you being introduced to other members of his team? Does your customer maintain eye contact with you when talking about the solution?
6. *Summarize what you have to offer* — and keep it brief. Don't belabor the point. If the customer has decided to buy your product or service, move ahead with the details.
7. *Clear up any concerns.* Now is the time to manage objections and answer questions.
8. *Wrap up the close* with a positive statement about the agreement and congratulate your client on her smart decision!

A Practical Example

Unlike traditional “widget” closing techniques, which focus on how many, how much, or when (e.g., “How many (#/\$) would you like?”), the service-oriented or assumptive close requires a much different kind of approach. In the example below, note how the salesperson follows these steps to move to the final close:

1. *Recap* the person's key issues identified in earlier visits.
2. *Reiterate* the outcomes your customer is looking for.
3. *Position* the name of your solution, identify what it's able to do for the customer and make it tangible.
4. *Explain* what the solution can do for your customer personally (e.g., “our staff becomes your team”).
5. *End* with your closing question.

Service-Oriented Solution/Assumptive Close:

“Based on the key issues you've identified [*list them here*] and the outcome[s] you desire, I believe our Worksite Wellness program is able to achieve a 20% cost reduction and management

of your lost work time. Also, our staff becomes your team. They take on the paperwork management and communication with payers, helping you enhance your organization and efficiency, allowing you to work with just one person, and giving you more time to devote to other pressing tasks. In order to establish the communication and cost-saving measures, we'd like to begin our assessment process. When could we schedule our team to begin? [OR] Would the beginning of January work, or is the third week of the month better for you?"

With the right kind of groundwork, you'll be well positioned to present the final "ta-da!" The close, then, becomes a moment to celebrate with your customer and reiterate what a sound decision she's made. Remember to make those mini-closes work for you, and you'll be celebrating, too.



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