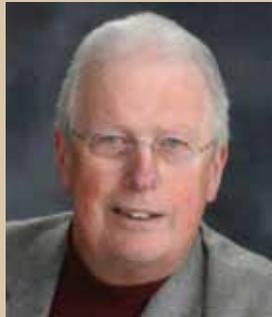


The Art of the Close

When closing with a customer, are you going for a commitment or settling for an agreement?

There comes a time when all your hard work and preparation come together. This is the moment you go for commitment. In business, whenever people interact, they make decisions: to talk, listen, or act on a recommendation.

Ideally, as a sales leader you want your customers to make decisions that are both well-informed and high in confidence. The reason for this is two-fold. First, the higher your customers are in confidence when they reach a final decision, the more effort they will put into carrying through that decision. At commit, your customer – or the Decider – owns the result and outcome just as much as you. At the highest level, the Decider is committed to seeing the decision



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complying. Neither is acceptable if you seek willing followers. In most cases, when surrender or compliance has occurred, the leader used positional or economic power to achieve that result. Think about your customers who only buy a certain product when it's on a deal. This type of command leadership, while occasionally acceptable, is never appropriate when you seek a co-owner of your idea.

Oftentimes, people may say they are committed to an idea, but then they fail to

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through, definitely more than someone who only thinks your idea may be good, more than the person who expresses interest in the idea, and more than the follower who may be excited by the idea.

Second, agreements can come from any level of engagement, but commitments only come from complete confidence. This means the extra time needed to gain a commitment, instead of an agreement, is definitely worth your effort.

Customers as co-owners

When your customers are negative toward your idea, but agree with the idea anyway, they are either surrendering or

follow through. When this happens, the leader, more often than not, has misread his followers and confused a high level of agreement with commitment.

Agreement and commitment are not the same. You can gain agreement from people at neutral, analytical, interested or enthusiastic. However, agreement at any of these levels is simply based on good intentions at that moment in time and, as such, is subject to change with the passage of time or an additional conversation.

Commitments are decisions that people willingly reach from confidence. In other words, when people are committed, they believe in their decisions and own them. Their decisions are promises, convictions, and definitely much more

than agreements. The highest quality and quantity of results occur when someone really becomes a customer or co-owner of an idea and acts on that idea without reservation.

Enthusiasm is close, but it is not closed. It represents good intentions that can be eroded with the first problem or issue. How often have you talked about how great a party or event would be, but you did not attend?

Or conversely, have you had people tell you your idea was fantastic, but they failed to act on it? Unfortunately, this happens all too often in business, and results are rarely what you wish for. If you are constantly following up with your people to make sure they are following through, you do not have their commitment.

Refining the 'close'

So how do you close for commitment? A simple confident statement is the easiest way: *"Based on our conversation, I believe Animax Ointment will solve the potential problems caused by bacterial or candidal infections."*

If the conversation is more detailed and complex, you could use a summary commitment: *"To review, Felimazole tablets are available in 2.5- and 5-mg dosing options and require no cutting, they are coated for easy administration and are the only FDA-approved and labeled drug for treatment of feline hyperthyroidism. So using Felimazole will provide you with peace of mind."*

Whether you choose the summary commitment or a simple confidence statement, the real secret is "shutting up" and waiting for your customer to respond. You have taken the conversation to confidence and need to see if your customer will join you there at confidence and co-ownership. If you talk again before your customer responds, you will only take the conversation down.

Another good tip – always close with a statement, never a question. When you ask a question at the close you are operating at continue/interested and encouraging your customer to join you there with more questions. Closing for commitment always occurs at absolute confidence and as a sales leader you must demonstrate your confidence first.

Try it. Find out for yourself. It works!