

SMASHING THE STALL WALL: Turning “Maybe” to “Yes” in Five Steps

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You’ve made an excellent presentation to a potential customer, building rapport and carefully outlining the benefits of your product. Your client has asked questions and reviewed your proposal with interest, seeming genuinely committed to closing the sale. Satisfied with your progress, you move in for the kill—and then your client voices the phrase every salesperson dreads hearing: *I’d like to think it over.*

Although these words can seem like a resounding “NO!” they don’t have to signify the end of your relationship with your client. If he weren’t interested in your product, he wouldn’t have lasted this far into your pitch. Something is stalling him, keeping him from committing to your services. Your job is to find out what that “something” is, address your client’s concerns and close the sale.

Turning the Stall into a Sale

While you might be tempted follow up later, giving your client a chance to think things over, *don’t do it!* Only five percent of follow-ups ever result in sales—95% of these potential customers either shop around or forget about your services altogether.

Un-stalling your prospect is easier than you might think. All you’ll need are the sales skills you already have—active listening, empathy and persistence—and knowledge of a few simple techniques that will help your potential customers understand why it’s better for them to buy now.

Step 1: Understand Your Client

Ask concise questions that indicate you want not only to be of service, but also to understand your client’s needs. If your prospect believes you are genuinely interested in him, then he will be much more likely to respond positively to your questions.

Don’t overload your prospect with intrusive queries, but instead limit yourself to a few focused, open-ended inquiries:

- “What interests you most about my services?”
- “What are your primary concerns about committing to my services?”
- “What can I do to earn your business?”

If you tailor your questions to your client’s particular mood and situation, you’ll be able to not only understand your client’s motivation, recognize the reasons why your prospect is stalling and guide him toward making a decision, but also identify why he was interested enough in your product to stick around in the first place.

Step 2: Focus on the Positive

While you'll eventually want to neutralize the impediments to your sale, consider first highlighting your prospect's positive feelings about your services. Restate his positive comments about your product, framing his words in the most positive light:

- "You need a new insurance policy because you've just made an addition to your home and you want to protect your investment."
- "You think this package would really suit your needs because it's comprehensive, inexpensive and easy to understand."
- "You've already invested a considerable amount of time researching your insurance needs and my services are consistent with what you've found to be of good value."

By building on your customer's positive feelings about your product, you'll reinforce the reasons why he already wants to close the sale, helping him make the decision to commit to your services.

Step 3: Eliminate the Negative

Once you've helped your client understand how your services clearly meet his identified needs, the negative aspects blocking his ability to make a decision won't seem as important. However, you still need to address these concerns or your prospect won't feel comfortable committing.

In Step One, you determined what factors were causing your client to stall. Perhaps his reasons fell into one of the following categories, all of which can be easily clarified and neutralized:

- **Need:** In Step Two, you identified and restated your client's need for your services. If he still feels he doesn't need your services, ask a few more questions until either *you* understand what he's looking for or *he* understands that you can provide it.
- **Trust:** Without your client's trust, you'll never close the sale. If he's hedging because he isn't comfortable with you or your company, give him more information about the quality of your product, the integrity of your organization and your personal commitment to his satisfaction.
- **Capacity:** If your prospect doesn't have the authority to make the purchase or the ability to pay for it, help him determine how best to sidestep this problem.
- **Urgency:** Probably the most common sales stall, lack of a sense of urgency can kill your sales prospects. However, once you've recognized this block, it's easy to work with your client to understand why it's important that he buy *now*.

It's critical to remember that your client's concerns are legitimate—don't diminish his concerns, but instead present possible solutions for them.

Step 4: Commit to Action

If your customer still isn't willing to commit 100%, try to define "baby steps" he can take that will move him closer to the sale. Does he need more information? Get it to him. Does he need to consult with his partner? Help him develop talking points to facilitate the conversation. Does he want to research the problem? Provide him with resources that point toward your solution.

Even if your prospect isn't ready to sign, try leave him with a "to do" list. If he feels a sense of commitment to you and your services, he is more likely to change his "I'll think about it" to "I'm ready to commit."

Step 5: Follow Up

If you are unable to close the sale during the current meeting, plan out follow-up steps with your prospect, involving him in the process. Make an appointment for your next discussion customer, and email him just prior to the meeting to recap what you'll be discussing. If you are serious about following up and take steps to ensure your customers feels a sense of commitment—not pressure—you'll have a great chance of closing the sale.

Remember, top sellers have a few key skills in common—ambition, persistence, empathy, goal-orientation, determination and honesty. By using these tools and following a simple approach, it is possible to smash the stall wall and turn your "maybes" into strong "yeses."