

12 Ways Agents Screw Up Sales Meetings - and How to Fix Them

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Can you relate to this: You're looking across your desk into the face of a couple who would be perfect clients for you. You know what you can provide is perfect for them and you're 99 percent sure they will accept your proposal. Then something goes wrong. They walk, and you don't know why. Sound familiar?

We've all been there, some of us more often than others. Worse, many agents will continue to face that situation and not understand what continues to go wrong. The good news is, as disappointing as those situations are, they serve as outstanding learning experiences. They also provide rare opportunities to examine and improve the way we connect with our prospects and clients.

1. Focusing on yourself

You, your products, and your company are only valuable to the client to the extent you can solve their problem or give them what they want. The client doesn't want to hear your presentation of who you are, where you come from, what you value, and what you do. The client wants to talk about their needs and wants. Get to them quickly.

2. Talking too much

Nearly every sales professional falls into this trap. Unfortunately, when you're talking, you're not doing the most important thing that is critical to the sale — focusing on the client. The safe rule of thumb for the ratio of listening to talking is 80-20. If you're in a meeting and find yourself talking more than 20 percent of the time, just switch to a question and be quiet. Remember, the key to selling is to ask questions and help people come to conclusions on their own.

3. Not asking questions

Questions are the heart of an effective selling situation. They serve two purposes. The primary purpose is to involve the client and help them come to their own conclusions. Often, that's the conclusion you would have presented. The difference is, if the client comes up with it, they believe it, but if you present it, the client doesn't necessarily believe it. The other role of questions is to elicit information that will help you frame your product or service within the client's criteria and values.

4. Asking the wrong questions

Some agents ask way too many questions or they ask irrelevant questions. The client

must believe that your questions are important, and that their answers will enable you to create a better plan for them.

5. Confusing them

Research indicates that the most common way for salespeople to screw up client conversations is by confusing the client. Here's how this happens: you deliver too much information, use terms and references that aren't familiar to the client, or you do a "data dive." Remember this — a confused mind will always say no. Confusion is uncomfortable, and people don't say yes when they're uncomfortable.

6. Excluding the real decision maker

When you see more than one person across the desk from you, it is your responsibility to connect with each one. At the very least you must identify the primary decision-maker and address them. Never assume you know who the primary decision-maker is. Too often in a situation with a husband and wife, the agent will assume that the husband is the primary decision-maker — big mistake. Give equal attention to each person.

7. Claiming credibility rather than demonstrating it

Saying you know something or have certain credentials isn't relevant to the client, unless you are able to show how those things help the client. If the client hires you to fix his Lexus, your degree from Auto Shop Academy is only of minimal importance. The real test is if you actually have the ability to be effective on high-performance import cars. The best thing you can do is provide proof.

How can you gain credibility before you get to demonstrate it? Simple. Use the Law of Other Messengers. People believe what others say about you more than what you say about yourself. For example, provide a book of endorsements, display photos of you with happy Lexus owners, or show certifications from Toyota.

8. Not speaking the "language"

We honor our clients by presenting information in a way that matches their mental preferences and personality. If I am a visual person, it is your responsibility to recognize that and explain your product or service in visual language. If I prefer structure and a process, then it is your responsibility to provide the structure or step-by-step process. To be successful at this, it is vital for you to become proficient at reading your clients.

9. Making it difficult to work with you

Companies and individuals lose sales because the process of doing business is too difficult. If you ask me to fill out forms, provide scads of data, or answer lots of questions, the value of the end result will be reduced proportionately by the hassle of my

involvement. And, if you collect lots of information, you'd better use it. Anything you can do to make the process easy and painless increases your chances that clients will initiate and complete the process. For example, life insurance firms often deliver applications that are already filled out.

10. Not recognizing “hot buttons”

Clients give you clues as to what excites them or angers them. Good agents recognize both the negative and the positive “hot buttons” and respond accordingly. The key to recognizing this is simply to pay attention and read the client.

11. **Not showing respect**

Once again, we go back to the hard and fast rule: It's never about you — it's always about the client. You may assume I don't know anything about cars or sound cards or financial planning, and that may well be true. But, if you act as though I'm an idiot, you'll lose me as a client and gain me as an adversary.

12. **Being needy**

We've all been needy at some point in our lives. We know what it feels like, and we've seen how other people retreat from us. Neediness is a powerful emotional state that is easily and quickly perceived by other people. When they feel it, they get suspicious of your intentions. Needy people do not focus on the best interests of the client. They focus on themselves and satisfying their needs.

You can't get to where you want to go until you know where you are. You can't fix a problem until you know what the problem is. What you've just read are the descriptions of the most common mistakes made in selling situations. The good news is, the solutions are simple, and when you implement them, you become a higher quality professional, attracting higher quality clients.

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