Gaining commitment to the purchase of your products or services has nothing do with manipulation, arm twisting or fancy closing techniques.

Instead, gaining commitment is a natural outcome of a well planned and carried out sales process.

However, commitment to purchase will not happen without a specific plan and effort on the part of the salesperson.

The following outlines four different techniques for helping the customer make his or her buying decisions.

**Gain commitment by asking for the order:** In this situation, the salesperson simply asks for the business. This approach is appropriate when the relationship is open and positive.

For example, the customer has purchased from you in the past and is in the habit of ordering on a regular basis, he or she will be comfortable with you simply asking for the sale. By formally asking, the salesperson shows the customer he/she is not being taken for granted.

Doug Westenbroek, Area Sales Representative, Ontario, California, simply asks the question, “Should we go ahead and do this? What do you think? Is this something you’d like to try? Are you ready to go ahead?”

When asking for the business, Shawn Frantz, a Loan Officer from Lewisburg, PA., suggests, “You have to be willing to step out of your comfort zone and say, “This is good for you. This is why you should be doing business with us. Think about it and I will call you tomorrow.” It depends on the personality of the people you are dealing with as to how you ask for commitment.”

**Gain commitment by summarizing:** In this case, the salesperson briefly reviews the major points discussed during earlier visits with the prospect.

Scott Walker, a Marketing Representative from Lisbon, N.Y., tells us, “When I feel the producer is at the point of making a commitment, I will summarize the things we have talked about and obtain his agreement. Then, I will say, ‘Is there anything else that’s stopping you?’ If he says no, then I’ll say, ‘Are you ready to buy today?’”
Carol Kemp, a Financial Services Rep from Watertown, N.Y., adds, ‘Before asking for commitment, I like to take some more time to summarize my proposal. This enables me to make sure he has a thorough understanding of everything we’ve talked about and everything I promised to do for him.

When asking for commitment in this way, you should:

- Summarize the benefits, and address any concerns.
- Restate features the customer liked, and quote the price.
- Ask, “What is your opinion about what we have discussed?”
- If the response is positive, simply say, “Would you like to go ahead?”
- If the response is negative, then return to earlier steps in the sales process and re-examine needs.

The summary technique is appropriate when you are proposing solutions to a complex problem. Summarizing also works better with some types of buyers, i.e. business buyers who enjoy analysis and a deliberate, logical problem-solving approach.

**Gain commitment by offering choices:** This approach offers the buyer a choice from among a group of viable options that will address his or her needs and wants.

Ron Guzzetta, a grape grower from Perrysburg, N.Y., tells us, “Give me two or three options to consider. You might say, ‘Here are a couple of things you can try. Digest those for a little while and then get back to me.’ If two or three chemicals will do about the same job and you show me the difference in price, those are helpful tools.”

When offering different options, make sure you present choices which are drawn from information the customer shared with you during earlier stages of the sales process. We can actually damage our relationship and credibility if we present options not in sync with the buyer’s preferences.

In effect, you are offering the buyer a choice between the purchase of A or B; B or C, etc. Regardless of the selection made, the prospect is making a commitment to buy from among choices that generally meet his or her expressed needs.

**Gain commitment by offering special features:** This technique involves the inclusion of something extra with the purchase. Examples might be a special discount, an added service, a gift, or a coupon at the time you ask for a commitment.

This can have appeal to long-time customers who expect a little extra for their loyalty. It can also ‘tip the scale’ with price buyers who are often motivated to act when presented with a special deal.

One caution: some business buyers see these types of specials as a ploy or gimmick to manipulate them. For example, Tom Corcoran, a crop grower from Leroy, N.Y., tells us, “We’ve had different people offer us trips or color TV’s if we place an order with them. We usually just tell the salesman to knock a thousand dollars off the bill and forget the TV or the trip.

“We really don’t fall for gimmicks. Usually, we buy based on a reputation for quality products and professional service.”

Most people like to be given options to choose from. When offered choices, the buyer feels a sense of control and ownership in the final decision. Relationship buyers prefer this approach when they feel the salesperson knows them well and the trust level is high.

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