



5 THINGS SALESPEOPLE DO TO SWITCH OFF PROSPECTS

by Leigh Wallinger

Selling business-to-business in the current marketplace is not for the faint-hearted. Company executives are time-poor and are swamped with approaches from salespeople – by telephone, by post, by email. They are constantly battling their email inboxes and voicemails.

Have you ever wondered how successful you have actually been when you simply get an appointment with one of these people? This is a huge achievement in itself.

Imagine you have finally secured a face-to-face meeting with a senior executive who you have been trying to meet for months. Finally, your persistence has paid off and you've got a 30 minute appointment. You've tried everything to get your foot in the door – phone calls, post & email – and have succeeded at last.

Get things wrong in this meeting and you are effectively locked out of this prospect – probably for months or until a new executive moves in. It is actually quite easy to get it wrong; do whatever you can to avoid falling into the following 5 traps which causes your prospect to switch off.

Trap 1. You give them a sales pitch

If you give a sales pitch, you lose the sale. Simple. Here's why:

At the end of your pitch your prospect, assuming he is still awake, will ask "how much is it?"

You think this means the prospect is interested in your product / service. In fact, in the vast majority of cases this indicates the imminent end of your discussions. You know you shouldn't give a price because you have no idea about your prospect's situation. You've spent the meeting talking / presenting and have learned very little about your prospect, their situation, problems and priorities.

However you have been asked a direct question which requires an answer.

So you give a price range. Inevitably, your prospect will indicate that this range is higher than he has in mind and that there is little point in continuing with the discussions. If you then counter with a lower price in an attempt to rescue the situation, your reputation is shot to pieces.

The result? A lost sale.

Trap 2. You ask them to tell you about their business

You've secured a short initial meeting with your prospect, who is busy. Do not waste their time asking for general information about their business – find out before the meeting. There are plenty of sources of data about companies, especially for larger companies.

Always undertake some pre-call research & analysis. This will help you to identify aspects of the prospect company that your product / service can impact and improve. So, arm yourself with background information and use this to demonstrate how knowledgeable you are about their industry and their markets.

Trap 3. You come across as a salesperson in search of some commission

A senior executive has a highly developed sense for identifying self-serving salespeople. Their time can be wasted by these individuals, who appear to have a solution looking for a problem to solve. To these executives, all salespeople, are assumed to be in this category unless and until they prove otherwise.



IMPORTANT: You have to be different to all the other salespeople. Don't do what everyone else does.

Try these 5 ways to stand out from the crowd:

- Focus on your prospect's company not on your own
- Ask pre-prepared questions to open up the discussion
- Keep conversations business-like
- Use stories about your successes with other clients
- Be professional, polite and patient.

Trap 4. You fail to offer anything of value during the meeting

This is another prevalent sales-killer. Busy executives look to get value out of all their meetings and it is up to you, the salesperson, to deliver. Be sure you have some answers for the key (but unasked) question "what's in it for me?"

Trap 5. You use manipulative sales techniques and push them into a corner

Using manipulative techniques to manoeuvre your prospect into a sale might well result in an order, unless your prospect can get out of it. However, there will be no follow on business. As an account development strategy, this is fundamentally flawed.

Nobody likes being bounced into placing an order. When you do this to a busy executive you do an immense amount of damage to your personal reputation and image of your company. The old adage that bad news travels faster than good news will be proved true as the word goes out to the executive's network about what has happened.

There is no long-term benefit in manipulating your prospect into buying something he or she is not comfortable with. Better to demonstrate the value your product / service offers and show, using ROI calculations, the compelling nature of your offer

Successful first meetings

The secret to a successful first meeting is simple:

- Keep the discussion at a business level.
- Ask questions. Very good questions.
- Focus on the prospect's situation / business / issues.

Do not focus on your company; how big you are; how long you've been in business etc. This is of no interest to the person you are meeting at this stage. If you can show that your product / service can improve the lot of your prospect, there's a good chance you will get ongoing engagement. Your initial meeting will mark the start of an ongoing sales campaign.

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