

Objections – Good...or Bad?

by Mary Ann Costello

“We don’t have the budget.”**“We’re satisfied with our current supplier.”****“Call me in three months.”**

How many times have you heard this? Objections are part and parcel of the sales experience. These how-to suggestions will help you prevent and defuse common sales objections.

You rarely meet a salesperson who jumps up and down with glee when their customer poses an objection. It seems every bone in their body aches as they feel the pain of the objection ringing in their ears. But sales folks rarely curl up. Instead, you ready for battle—after all, objections are bad and are a direct stab at you, your products, your company, and your credibility with your customer.

Or are they? If you talk to the top one percent of salespeople around the globe about objections, they declare their love for them! They claim the more the merrier, and the earlier the better. Why do they have such a different view?

Let’s look at the concept of objections from different points of view.

The client is thinking:

1. I have the right to object to anything at anytime. After all, I’m the client and I pay the bill.
2. I have the right to understand fully what someone is saying to me. I object to the lack of clarity in the messaging you’re giving me. I have the right to do this.
3. I am not sure if I fully understand the value that is being presented to me. As a responsible party to my company, I must test the water and make sure that the perceived value is real for my company and for me.
4. If I object to something, I must be taken seriously. My objections must be answered.

You are thinking:

1. My customer is challenging my value proposition and, perhaps, my integrity.
2. I must combat the objection from my client. I must jump right on it and win.
3. If my customer continues to object, I will surely lose.
4. Why is my customer wasting my time? If they don’t want to do business with me, why can’t they just say so?



Always, always listen, empathize, and question for clarity before attempting to handle any perceived objection you hear.

So what's really going on?

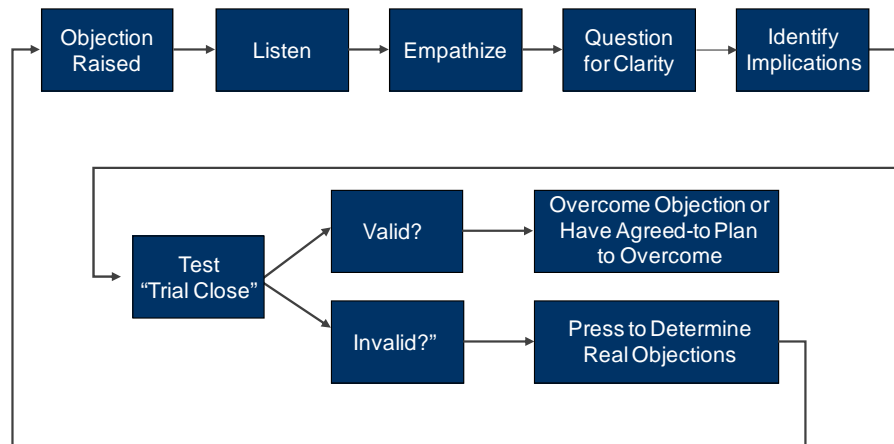
Objections are a welcome part of any sales process.

- Objections can be buying signals to help the client and you get to YES.
- Objections identify your buyer's concerns about risk.
- Objections are not an attack, but rather an opportunity for clarity and alternatives.
- Objections help you frame your recommendations and validate your value proposition(s).
- Objections allow you to reinforce your messaging. Many objections arise as a result of poor communications or lack of understanding.
- **Objections are a good thing!**

So what are the best practices for dealing with or handling objections from your client when you get them?

This is an objection-handling process that works well:

1. Your client raises an objection.
2. You listen with the intent to understand, not with the intent of answering.
3. You empathize with the client, displaying a caring attitude toward what is being said.
4. You question your client for clarity to make sure you understand the real objection. Usually the first thing out of a client's mouth is NOT the real objection.
5. You identify the implications involved.
6. You test to see if what you understand is valid. If it is, overcome the objection or have an agreed-to plan of action to overcome it. If your understanding of the objection is invalid, then you need to start the process again to try and understand what is really bothering your client.



CPS Objection-Handling Process

The most important thing to remember is not to immediately jump and handle the first thing that sounds like an objection. If you do, the client will think, "That is not what I am objecting to. But since my salesperson has become so defensive, I better adopt it as an objection." Always, always listen, empathize, and question for clarity before attempting to handle any perceived objection you hear.

Let's try a few:

1. **Client:** "We don't have the budget."

You: "I hear this often in these times of turmoil and uncertainty in the marketplace. During these tough economic times, many clients have had similar fears about budgets and spending. May I ask you a few questions to make sure I understand exactly what you mean?"

2. **Client:** "We are satisfied with our current supplier."

You: "It is a good thing when people are happy with their current supplier. I know many clients like you who were pleased with their supplier, but who were also open to listening to other alternatives if they made sense for their business. May I ask you a few questions to make sure I understand what you have said? I won't waste your time."

3. **Client:** "Your competitor said your prices are too high."

You: "I have heard that our competitors have a different perception of our value proposition and I think I know why. Before I explain that to you, may I ask a few questions to ensure I fully understand what you are saying?"

4. **Client:** "I don't have time, call me in three months."

You: "I know you have a busy schedule and I certainly don't want to waste your time. My other clients have also been overworked and overwhelmed in this economic downturn. They found that I helped them find time to do the things they are passionate about vs. the things they don't like to do. Could I ask you a question to make sure I understand your concern?"

5. **Client:** "Your technical people don't know what they are doing."

You: "Sometimes I hear the same thing from my clients with strong technology skills like you. It is hard to listen to someone talk "baby techie talk" when you need the Ph.D. version. Before I address this concern, may I ask you a few questions so I fully understand you?"

6. **Client:** "Your customer support line is terrible."

You: "I understand what you mean about customer support lines in this day and age. I agree that it can be very frustrating listening to menus of choices when you have an issue you need help with. So I can make sure I address your issues completely, may I ask a few questions for clarity?"

What can you do to get better at managing objections?

Bottom line, there are only a handful of objections that you hear from your customers. Have a brainstorming session with other salespeople in your company to come up with a Top 10 list of objections (or Top Five if you can't think of 10). Then brainstorm how to address them. Write the answers down. Share them with each other. And then practice. I mean practice handling objections with your peers. Once you address your Top 10 objections, you can be confident that you can handle anything your customer throws your way.



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