

# ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

*The danger of too much information and how to avoid it*

By Hal Slater

**T**he objective of selling is to persuade, not to educate. The most common mistake made by the novice salesperson lies in giving the prospect too much information. This creates confusion and fills up the person's mental file cabinet with facts to be verified. Although it is important for you to have a thorough knowledge of your product, it is not necessary to share with your prospect everything you know.

According to Percy Whiting, who wrote some of Dale Carnegie's early coursework material, "Give your buyers enough information, and no more, to convince them they are justified in

buying now." In the words of the East Indian yogi Paramahansa Yogananda, "He is a fool who cannot conceal his wisdom."

## SILENCE IS GOLDEN

Keeping your mouth shut requires practice but is essential once you've asked for the order. You must remain calm and certain without fumbling or stuttering. Look at your prospect with the look that is on your face when you're watching someone you care about enjoy themselves, and don't say another word. The timeworn advice to

"Ask a closing question and shut up" holds as true today as always. It's also true that the first person to speak buys, so remember that you are there to sell.

There can be a great deal of pressure on both parties at this moment.

In one situation, a new automotive salesman, who had

been losing sales due to his inability to cope with the pressure, would start talking before the prospect had a chance to respond to a closing question. After a serious upbraiding one morning, the salesman took a buyer into his booth. Following instructions, he quoted full window sticker price, wrote the purchase order, asked for an approval, and shut up. The silence was deafening. After an eternity of five or 10 minutes, the buyer leaned over and signed the purchase order. At that point, the salesman called for a manager to assist with delivery of the car. This was an unusual request as there was nothing difficult about the delivery.

As the buyer was transferred to the manager's office to complete the sale, the salesman revealed the problem to another manager. It seems that during that period of stress, the salesman had lost bladder control and had an accident that made standing up too embarrassing.

Obviously, this moment of truth can be extremely stressful.

Just breathe deeply, relax, and smile the way you smile when you see a child at play. Imagine how much your new customer is going to enjoy the benefits of his or her new spa or pool. Avoid the mistake of giving people too much information.

The difficulty comes in determining the difference between enough information and too much information. What seems barely adequate to one person may be overdoing it for another. The only way to know how much information any one of your



# WHAT MUST THEY BELIEVE TO BUY TODAY?

**W**hat does a person have to believe to buy a pool or spa today? Less than you probably think. Most beginning salespeople make the mistake of overselling — filling the silence with a stream of facts. The result is a confused customer with too many worries. Furthermore, research shows that in high-ticket selling, citing features creates price concerns.

So what's the solution? Limit your presentation to only those things a person must believe to buy today.

The first thing customers must believe is that you and your business are credible and reliable. That is why rapport is so important. For you to come across as reliable, customers must believe that you have their interests at heart. To be credible, you must demonstrate honesty and knowledge (or access to knowledge) and the willingness to admit what you do not know.

Next, buyers must believe that the product will fit their genuine needs. No matter how much they like you, no matter how much money you can save them, people will not make a high-ticket purchase if they don't feel the product has the ability to satisfy their needs.

Thirdly, they must believe that either the manufacturer or the deal-

er (preferably both) are competent. Calling yourself "best" is pretty hard to prove and veritably invites shopping around. Most customers are satisfied to know that their dealer is "more than adequate" — which is much easier to prove and can be settled on the spot.

Then there's the issue of "money." Money breaks down into two parts: affordability and value. Customers must believe that they have the means to meet the financial terms required (cash, credit, income), and they must believe that your price is fair.

Lastly, they must believe that they have a reason to act today. Fortunately, if they really want the product, the reason doesn't have to be a good one. The relief of ending the shopping process may be enough if you've resolved all their purchasing issues. Many salespeople overuse price drops as a reason customers should act today. Don't confuse selling with negotiating. If your product is properly sold, there is little need to lower the price. If the negotiations call for you to do something, offer something else they want, instead.

There you have it and the list is short. With all customers, this is what you need to address. Although individual buyers may have specific additional concerns, handle those issues on a case-by-case basis, only as they arise. — H.S.

customers needs is to read the very subtle clues in their responses that the normal person does not notice.

Each person has a unique strategy for making buying decisions, based on both a conscious need for certain content-based information and an unconscious need to have that information communicated in a preferred sensory process. Your knowledge of the product will be most useful in meeting the prospect's need for content-based information while your people-reading ability is what allows you to know which sensory channels to use. The goal is to figure out what type of information and how much of it is appropriate for any given prospect. At a mostly subconscious level, you may have already been doing this, making slight changes in the sensory vocabulary you use until you start to get a more enthusiastic response.

## THE FULL-BODY NOD

If you're on the right track with a prospect, you'll likely see them exhibit the most enthusiastic response you could hope for: the full-body nod. Every sales professional senses the difference between a deliberate nod of the head, which is an indication that the listener has thought over what you've said and agrees, and the spontaneous, free-flowing nod you really want. This second response, which is relaxed and seems to emanate from the lower neck and may even cause the whole body to shake slightly, is called the full-body nod. While the deliberate head nod is a response to the content of your message, the full-body nod is a response to the sensory terms you used to communicate that content. When you deliver your mes-

sage in the sense channels the buyers are most comfortable with, you will see the full-body nod, and it indicates that you are indeed talking their language about what they think is important.

To better understand this concept, try this experiment. Using non-sensory terms, ask someone for his or her strategy for selecting something. For instance, you might ask, "If you are in the market to buy a house, how do you know what constitutes a good house?" The subject might say something that reveals little information, such as, "Oh, I don't know. There'll be something about it that seems right." If so, feed back the person's response using sensory-specific language, such as, "You mean there will be something that you *feel* ... while *looking* around ... that makes you *think* ... that this *sounds* like a good deal?" You will notice that the person responds to one or several of these key sensory words with a full-body nod and that he or she stiffens up on the others. The terms that generate the full-body nod come from the senses that represent elements of the buyer's sensory-based strategy.

If you get a full-body nod only on the word "looking," then you know that the visual element is the key to selling to this person. The person may respond positively to more than one sense element, so check them all out.

Use the customer's preferred sense channels to sell your product. Cover all necessary bases, but focus on those qualities and benefits of your product that appeal to those senses. You'll be amazed at how easy it can be to cover all of the information the customer feels is important without overtalking.

## ASSOCIATIVE RESPONSE

There is yet another way to create positive emotions for your product and limit your sales presentation to the bare essentials. Take, for example, the spa cover. People shopping for a new spa cover are probably not brimming with excitement about buying a new one. They probably spent months nursing the old one along, trying to get every last bit of life out of it. Eventually, the day for replacing it arrives, and the buyer wants to get the chore done as quickly and economically as possible. How can you use emotional excitement to sell a spa cover? There is a way, and it is referred to as associative response.

In school, you probably studied the Russian scientist Pavlov. As you may recall, he laid the foundation for the science of behavioral psychology with experiments in which he conditioned dogs to respond to a repeated stimulus. He would ring a bell, then feed his dogs, ring a bell, then feed his dogs. Pretty soon, every time he rang a bell, he wanted to feed a dog. And the dogs didn't mind. The dogs became conditioned to anticipate food after the sound of the bell, and they would salivate in response to it. Pavlov had created what is called a conditioned response.

You often do the same with your buyers whether you mean to or not. By consistently repeating a specific gesture, sound, tone of voice, or facial expression, you set up an associative response pattern. If you are deliberate, you can create an association between your action and your buyer's positive emotions. If you are not aware of this pattern, you may inadvertently be establishing associations that undermine your attempts to cre-

ate excitement.

Here is one way that a salesperson could stimulate the buyer's enthusiasm for a spa cover.

**BUYER:** "I need a new spa cover. Mine broke into two pieces this morning and I don't have a lot of money to spend."

**SELLER:** (standing near the display spas with covers) "Well, you'll love this one. It's practically free (touching the cover). With its thick insulating foam core, it's very energy efficient. The money it saves you on your heating bill will almost make

the cover pay for itself."

**BUYER:** "That sounds good, but aren't those energy-saving ones more expensive?"

**SELLER:** (turning away from the spa cover as customer raises this question) "This one is an exceptionally good value, and the energy savings are substantial (turning toward the spa). Think how nice it will be to know your spa will always be hot and ready when you want it most — be it at the end of a long, hard day or late in the evening when the kids are in

bed. And the tight seal the cover creates will prevent evaporation and save you from having to tap off the spa between water changes." (touching the cover's edge approvingly).

**BUYER:** "It would be nice not to have to worry about the water level or temperature so much."

**SELLER:** (taking advantage of the opportunity to associate this positive response with the spa cover and touching it again as the buyer begins the rationalization process): "By this time tomorrow, you can have this new cover right there in your yard, keeping your spa hot, clean, safe and ready for your next soak. We make it easy for you. Our delivery people will even remove the old cover if you want."

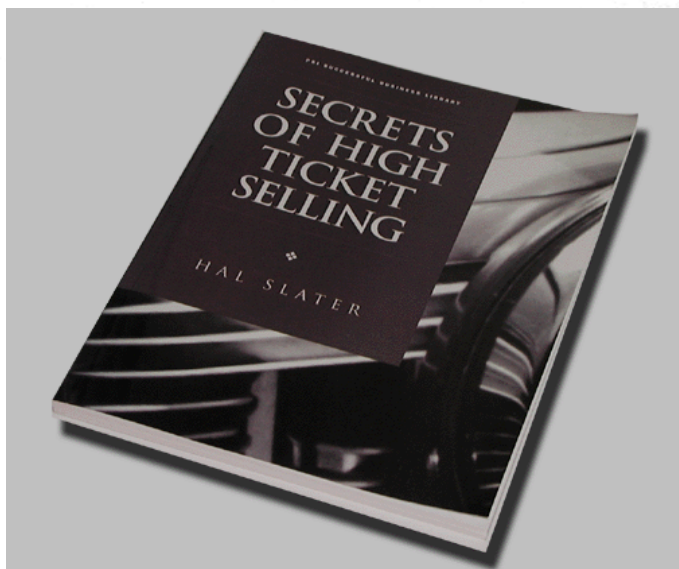
This salesperson really packed that exchange, covering first the real money issue of value, then the necessary reassurance that the cost is reasonable. By painting a glowing picture of the buyer enjoying a hot spa anytime without the drudgery of struggling with a broken cover, the seller has managed to turn the buyer's attention from affordability to benefits. This spa cover begins to sound like fun.

In addition, the seller has done a thorough job of using the hands and body to associate good feelings with the product and set aside any doubts or questions. Each good thing said about the product was accompanied by a stroke or a pat. Every time the buyer brought up a potential negative, the seller moved away from the spa cover.

Another key point to consider is that you, too, have conditioned responses.

You undoubtedly show a consistent appreciation response each time you get a positive response from a buyer. Likewise, when the buyer responds negatively, you will exhibit a rejection response. The point to ponder is which of these responses most resembles your response at the close? If you look more like your rejection response, that could have a negative impact on sales. Learn to control your physiology, think about how much your prospect will enjoy his or her new purchase and send out your appreciation response. This won't make them buy, but it may stop you from inadvertently talking them out of it. ■

*Hal Slater sold upscale swimming pools in Southern California before becoming a nationally known sales consultant, trainer, author and speaker. He will be presenting a seminar at AQUA International in Las Vegas, Nov. 30-Dec. 2. This article was adapted from his book *Secrets of High Ticket Selling* (1998, The Oasis Press).*



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