

Transcript – GET to YES Podcast

E10: B2B Closing a Sale with Questions

Today we're going to get into the part of every sales role that creates the most mixed feelings. It can create the highest level of anxiety and stress, but it can also deliver those great highs... or those terrible, terrible lows. Yep, that's right, we're talking about closing the sale.

Regardless of whether you're selling to Beauty salons, Skin Clinics or owners of Hairdressing Salons or Spray Tan Salons, everyone needs to master closing skills. As a sales trainer, I've discovered that some people become very uncomfortable when they're approaching the time to close.

A lot of people I work with fear rejection, and I must admit, that I've tended to mostly observe it amongst the girls I train. After all, us blokes have learned to handle rejection at a very young age... *wink* Seriously though, rejection stimulates many emotions – a feeling of discomfort, rebuttal, or the feeling that you're not being accepted. And some people become overly conscious of it, at the point of closing. If this is you, you need to recognise that the rejection isn't personal.

For others, their stress point could be having to ask potential clients for money. Maybe what you're selling is outside a price range that you feel comfortable with. Or perhaps you're fearful of asking for the order at the wrong time and potentially looking foolish. Sometimes it can just be the fear of silence that can occur after an attempted close

Regardless of the reason, the sea of emotions that mostly centre around FEAR, can be positively managed, with practice.

Let's look at my favourite acronym for the word FEAR: False Evidence Appearing Real.

Fear only exists in your head, because you don't normally see fear in your buyer's eyes. However, I've also discovered, that by breaking down the process of closing I can help salespeople really understand its simplicity... and it normally results in a tremendous change in their selling style and their closing ratios can double!

So, let's first break it down and start with some definitions of closing: Here are 3 good ones:

1. Closing is the process of helping people make a decision.

Some of your clients aren't good decision-makers, so skilful closing will help and support those people, to make the right decision, at the right time.

2. In a sales conversation, closing is reaching an agreement to move forward, or to buy what's being offered.

And this the one that really surprised me, when I was younger...

3. Closing the sale occurs when the seller and the buyer agree to the conditions of the sale

WOW. Understanding that really changed my confidence. When I was younger, I always thought that as I was the seller, I had to be the one who was submissive. That I had to give in or that I had to be the

one to drop the price. But when I realised that I had a say in what was happening and that both the seller and the buyer had to agree, it really changed how I felt about closing. And as a result, my confidence and closing skills really lifted.

The most common thing I see when salespeople attempt to close, is that they close with a statement.

Let me share an example. I recall being out on the road training a young lady in the south-western suburbs of Sydney, calling on salons. The salon we were in was an existing client and her call plan was to sell-in the Christmas promotions. Now, we all know planning to sell-in heaps of promotions can be quite challenging. The sales rep did the right thing – she positioned herself next to the salon owner with her presentation folder on her lap, and she had turned it around, so it was facing the owner and she was going through the promotions, one by one, page by page.

I specifically remember her detailing a specific promotion by saying, “With this promotion, you buy 12 and you get 4 free.” Then she paused, and there was deathly silence.

The Salon Owner didn’t say anything and after what was only a brief pause, the sales rep assumed she wasn’t interested and turned the page. She was about to detail the next promotion... when I took the opportunity to ask the salon owner... “Jenny, I noticed you carry a lot of that product. Would you be open to sharing your thoughts on the previous promotion?” Then I waited for the salon owner to respond.

She looked up and replied, “Thanks for asking. Yes, we sell a lot of that product as it’s one of the girl’s favourite. I was thinking, whether I’d buy a few of those.” With that, she turned to the rep and asked “Can I buy multiples of that promotion?” The rep responded... “Arhh yeah.” The owner then said “Good, I’ll have three.”

So, what happened there? My observations were that the salesperson tried to close using a statement: “With this promotion, you buy 12 and get 4 free.” But because it was a statement, the client thought there was possibly more information to come, so she remained quiet and waited, hence the silence. However, when a question was asked, you not only got to hear what the client was thinking but she increased the order, 3-fold.

It’s important to be mindful that a close is a question, not a statement. If you want clients to buy, you must ask them to.

So, when you do close, what sort of response are you going to get?

Generally, there are three main responses:

- The first one is YES.
That response is clear, so you note the order and move on.
- The second response is NO.
Now you know what that means on the surface, or do you?
Because NO doesn’t always mean NO. It could mean, NO not now. Or NO, not today. Or even NO, not now... because one of my staff are away at the moment, so can I buy it next month?

Don't be too quick to react to a NO, as *sometimes* it's not a real NO. Endeavour to gently explore what they mean by NO – you may be surprised.

- The third response is MAYBE.
What does MAYBE mean? I see a lot of salespeople get excited about MAYBEs. They come back from presentations saying "You know... she said MAYBE, this is going to be a great account when it comes off!" As a result, quite often a MAYBE ends up on their pipeline or new business reports and then they wonder why MAYBEs never come off.

Well... for me MAYBE means NO. Because, quite often a MAYBE is a NO in disguise. It can be offered by someone who's trying to avoid confrontation, or is uncomfortable about saying NO. Who knows... they may have had a bad experience when they've said NO to another rep. So again, you need to endeavour to gently explore what they mean by MAYBE, and whether it really is a MAYBE or a NO in disguise.

Let's reflect on some of the points from this episode:

- Closing can create some of the highest highs you'll experience as a professional salesperson.
- To experience those highs, you need to be confident and comfortable with the process of closing.
- If you want clients to buy, you need to ask them to.
- You need to understand that a close is a question, not a statement, and it's the little bit you put at the end, like... "Will I add that to your order?" THAT'S THE CLOSE.

While there are many closing techniques out there, beware of using some of the manipulative closing techniques, especially in our people-oriented salon industry. If you use them, you'll very quickly undo the trust you've worked so hard to build with your salon clients.

In the next podcast (E11), I'll share with you three different closing techniques, that are comfortable, respectful, easy to master and more importantly (after years of experimentation), that work well in the salon industry... when selling the types of products and services you sell.

