



### Consider Retooling Your Sales Team

Unfortunately, salespeople haven't kept pace with the changes. Their perception by customers is still negative. Never ones to inspire a great deal of trust due to the pressure-filled, manipulative tactics used by the stereotypical salesman, even today salespeople are treated with suspicion by customers, yet for different reasons.

FULL ARTICLE ON PAGE [2](#)

### Sales Process – The Secret to Closing More Sales

Most sales training programs that teach salespeople how to sell specific products or services do not mention business problems. This is an unfortunate oversight, as qualifying and quantifying business problems is the secret to closing more sales!

FULL ARTICLE ON PAGE [3](#)

### Impact Sales Using Impact Questions

Good impact questions highlight your customer's problems, creating a sense of urgency that hauls him out of that quicksand, forcing him to step back and take a long, hard look at that big picture.

FULL ARTICLE ON PAGE [4](#)

### Treasure Hunt for Pain

When you meet with a prospect, they may believe their issue is one thing. It is up to you to ask the right questions to make sure you—and the prospect—know what the real issue is. Then, and only then, can you determine if you have a solution.

FULL ARTICLE ON PAGE [5](#)



## Consider Retooling Your Sales Team



Customers are more sophisticated and better informed than ever. Competition has increased; even the venerable “old” names (like Microsoft) have upstarts nipping successfully at their heels. Deals are larger, more complex, increasing buyer’s concerns about making a bad decision. This extends sales cycles and brings more decision makers into the equation. Trust between the seller and the customer becomes more important than ever.

Unfortunately, salespeople haven’t kept pace with the changes. Their perception by customers is still negative. Never ones to inspire a great deal of trust due to the pressure-filled, manipulative tactics used by the stereotypical salesman, even today salespeople are treated with suspicion by customers, yet for different reasons.

### The research by The Sales Board substantiates this:

- 82% of salespeople can’t differentiate themselves from their competition, according to the buyers surveyed.
- 95% of salespeople talk too much, the buyers say.
- 86% of salespeople ask the wrong questions.
- Only 18% of salespeople can close without needing to offer discounts or incentives of some kind.

### How Selling Has Evolved

A recent article by Jeff Thul, of the Prime Resource Group, summarizes the evolution in selling as well as anyone has. Features and Benefit (Transactional) Selling (1950’s to early 1970’s) was very much sales pitch oriented. “Here’s what we offer. Let me tell you about everything we’ve got and you can tell me what interests you.” It was the classic product pusher approach. The role of salesman (I use the masculine purposefully) was to be a persuader; closing techniques, overcoming objections, and presentation skills were highly valued. Training was entirely product knowledge based. Salespeople were almost universally disliked because of the pressure tactics they used.

### Solution Selling

Solution Selling was the successor to the features and benefit approach. In the vogue from the mid 1970’s through the end of the 20th century, solution selling positioned the salesperson as a problem solver, although the customer usually had to diagnose the problem himself, and often did a poor job of it. The solution offered by the salesperson was typically little more than some off the shelf feature and benefit canned presentation. Product knowledge was still king,

while the emphasis on closing and pressure had diminished only slightly. Salespeople were still seen with some suspicion because they continued to give canned presentations, and brought little value to the customer.

### Consultative Selling

In the last few years things have gotten so complex that often prospects have difficulty understanding the real causes and impacts of their problems, let alone be able to distinguish between you and your competitors. This presents a wonderful opportunity for the salesperson that has a process that can help the prospect diagnose the problem, and then prescribe a unique solution. It’s no longer about psychological games and forceful personalities. It’s about trust; about helping, not selling. Both parties are (metaphorically) on the same side of the table, working together, and the buyer wants freedom of choice.

### Product Pushers vs. Problem Solvers

The sad fact is that most salespeople, even the young ones that should know better, are still back in the 1950’s selling features and benefits ... despite any training they may have had in consultative selling methodologies. They’ve become a new generation of dinosaurs. They have not made the transition from transactional selling to consultative, relationship selling. Maybe that’s why sales leaders like you are so frustrated. You know that your team should be performing at a higher level, yet for most companies the selling chaos continues.


### How to Spot a Dinosaur on Your Team

- They think making great presentations is more important than asking insightful questions.
- They don’t follow a sales process.
- They talk too much.
- Their prospects shop their proposals.
- They can’t effectively differentiate themselves from their competition.
- They rely on discounting to close business.
- Their sales forecasts are more fiction than reality.

Yet often management exacerbates the problem by focusing on the wrong selling skills for their people. Are you emphasizing ...

- Product knowledge at the expense of selling skills?
- Presentation skills versus asking insightful questions and listening well?
- Closing and overcoming objections or building trust?

### Doctors and Pharmacists

Doctors make more than pharmacists because they are able to diagnose problems and prescribe a solution. Pharmacists, not to demean their profession, simply fill orders. Today, you customers don’t want order takers. They want the kind of help from your salespeople that doctors provide to their patients, and, yes, they’re willing to pay for it. 

About the Author: Ted Gulas President & CEO of the Gulas Group, which specializes in the development of “Human Capital”, by guiding individuals, teams and organizations to their goals. Since 1989 Ted’s organization has been focused in three areas for results; assessments, workload/time planning and sales development.

# Sales Process – The Secret to Closing More Sales

Most sales training programs that teach salespeople how to sell specific products or services do not mention business problems. This is an unfortunate oversight, as qualifying and quantifying business problems is the secret to closing more sales!

## What is a Business Problem?

A business problem is any activity or outcome that negatively impacts a business. Examples of negative impacts include reductions in revenue, profits, customer satisfaction, employee productivity, job satisfaction, etc.

## Here is an example of a business problem description:

Many mission-critical software applications (e-business, manufacturing, point-of-sale, etc.) need to access relational databases in order to function. If a database has problems (goes down or suffers data loss or corruption), application downtime can cost companies tens of thousands of dollars per minute in lost sales, lost customers, and lost opportunities.

In the above example, the business problem is a database that is not functioning properly.

What is the relationship between Business Problems and the Features and Benefits of a product or service?

Features are what actually solve business problems. Benefits are what customers enjoy when the business problem has been solved.

The only features prospects actually care about are the ones that will solve their own specific business problems. If we randomly spew long lists of features and benefits at prospects, in effect we are hoping they are already aware of their business problems, and they will somehow figure out which of our (product or service) features will solve their business problems. This is a very inefficient way to sell. Plus, we run the risk that our prospects will NOT figure out which features will solve their business problems. Or, they may become bored and “switch off” before we mention features that may actually be of interest to them!

If you are going to talk about features and benefits, discuss only those features that will solve your prospect’s specific business problems! Of course, you need to identify your prospect’s business problems if you want to have this kind of highly targeted discussion.

If your employer’s product or service training programs do not specifically address business problems, you will need to do some digging to uncover them. Ask the question, “What PROBLEMS does this product or service solve?” Another way to ask this question is, “What would motivate a prospect to make the investment required to buy this product/service?” Then, once you have made a list of the most important business problems, ask, “What questions can I ask that will help me figure out whether a prospect has any of these business problems?”

When you become an expert in business problems and related qualifying questions, your education will not be complete. You also need to learn the questions you can ask to quantify the impact of each business problem.



## What is a Quantified Impact?

Quantified impacts are dollar values or percentages with associated time frames that can be assigned to specific business problems. In the earlier business problem description, the quantified impact was “tens of thousands of dollars per minute”.

Quantified impacts are an invaluable aid to closing sales. How? If the quantified impact of a business problem exceeds the investment required to fix the problem, a buying decision is easy to justify. The larger the difference between the quantified impact and the required investment, the easier it becomes to close the sale. If the quantified impact is a multiple of the required investment (for example, a quantified impact of MILLIONS of dollars versus a required investment of THOUSANDS of dollars), the buying decision becomes “a no-brainer.”

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** In order for a quantified impact to add value to the sales process, your prospect must be the source of the numbers. Why? In general, prospects don’t trust salespeople. Many have dealt with salespeople who were more interested in making sales than they were in providing value. Plus, prospects recognize that salespeople have a vested interest in creating a compelling business case that can be used to support a buying decision. This causes prospects to discount any quantified impact information that salespeople provide. However, if the prospect is the source of the quantified impact information, they perceive it as unquestioned truth. This makes learning how to ask quantifying questions a valuable skill indeed!

If you want to close more sales, invest some time and effort in identifying the business problems that can be solved by your products and services. If you become an expert in business problems and the questions you can ask to:

1. determine whether a prospect has specific business problems, and
2. quantify the impact of those business problems, you will close more sales faster and with less effort. 

By Alan Rigg. Article Source: [http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Alan\\_Rigg](http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Alan_Rigg)

## Impact Sales Using Impact Questions

It's all too easy for prospective customers to get so caught up in life's day-to-day obligations that they miss the big picture, pushing aside major ongoing problems for the moment. But moments become hours, hours become days, days become years ... and the customer's problems remain unsolved, just buried in the quicksand of daily minutiae, smothering their business. Good impact questions highlight your customer's problems, creating a sense of urgency that hauls him out of that quicksand, forcing him to step back and take a long, hard look at that big picture.

### How Impact Questions Encourage Change

People can be reluctant to step out of their comfort zones; their fear of the unknown trumps their frustration with their problems. They're even more reluctant to change if a salesperson jumps on them with a solution the minute the problem is mentioned, more interested in the sale than the client. That's why it pays to engage customers emotionally. Give your customer time to vent about his company's problem and how it affects him. As he does so, walk him through his problem, asking him to relive it and calculate how that issue affects his company and himself. You can't hurry trust, but listening to your customer will help you ask the right impact questions at the right time. This helps you build a genuine rapport and channel your customer's emotions onto the right path for him and for you.

### Coaching the Customer Through It

Impact questions often start with coaching a customer into calculating how much money he'll lose by sticking with his current vendor, product, or service. Let's look at the approach Katherine took when she met with the Vice President of purchasing at Lowe-Price, a major discount department store chain, to discuss her company's clothing line.

The V.P. confided to Katherine that Lowe-Price had ongoing issues with Shag Clothing, its swimsuit vendor. Shag typically delivered the swimsuits four weeks late. In the short swimsuit shopping season, that's missing half the season—and more than half the revenue, as thousands of customers who'd come in for swimsuits and stay to buy additional Lowe-Price products saw those empty swimsuit racks by the entrance and quickly exited, disappointed and empty-handed. This domino effect continued as Shag's late deliveries resulted in time lost tracking shipments, money lost paying overtime for employees stocking shelves at the last minute, and personal time lost as the V.P. missed family events while scrambling to calm the ripple effects of Shag's lateness. Since Lowe-Price experienced this problem once a quarter, the V.P. and Katherine estimated that the company lost \$1.8 million a year!

### How to Use Impact Questions

Now that Katherine had coached the V.P. into quantifying his problem and they'd established a rapport, she asked her first impact question: "What do you think the impact on your company will be if you stay with your current vendor?"

The V.P. shook his head, stunned. "I can't believe that we've put up with this problem this long. A loss of \$1.8 million is a huge financial drain on our company. This conversation has made me realize that we can't afford not to change vendors!"

Each of Katherine's impact questions hit closer to home, helping the V.P. recognize the problem and take ownership of it. "What impact do you think this problem could have on your role within your company?"



"I'm afraid I'll lose my job if we keep losing money like this," he admitted.

Katherine nodded sympathetically. "You also mentioned losing time with your family. Do you think that situation will change if your problem continues?"

"Unless we switch vendors, I'll be spending more late nights and weekends here instead of with my kids. I don't want that to happen." The V.P. frowned. "We need to do something about this situation immediately!"


Once Katherine's coaching encouraged the V.P. to open up about his concerns, her impact questions helped her discover what he valued most: his family time. Now Katherine could situate her product as a solution to his problem—and a way for him to spend more time doing the things he wanted to do and less time putting out fires at work.

Note that Katherine was sincere and sympathetic in her conversation with the V.P., so they both benefited. As a salesperson, you don't want to use impact questions to scare a customer into doing business with you—nobody likes to feel manipulated, especially customers. Once you take the time to listen to your customers, you'll know based on their responses whether you've earned the right to start the sales process. If you have, sell your heart out. If you haven't, it's time to reposition your questions and reopen your dialogue with your customer.

After you've taken your customer through the impact questions and he recognizes the need for change, be sure to present him with a positive picture of the future that will not only lift his spirits, but position you as the person who can help solve his problem.

### Sample Impact Questions

- "How does this problem affect sales? Profitability? Scheduling? On-time deliveries? Quality? Production?"
- "What do you think these problems are costing you?"
- "How is this problem impacting the bottom line?"
- "Let's assume you decide not to address this problem immediately. What will that cost you this year?"
- "If you don't fix this problem, what is the potential impact on your business? Can you afford to take that risk?"

Good impact questions engage customers personally, not telling them but rather, helping them to recognize their business problems, pulling them out of that quicksand they're stuck in and setting them on the road to a brighter future for both you and your customers. 

## Treasure Hunt for Pain



Many salespeople believe their product or service is perfect for everyone. They fail to find the prospect's pain before 'pitching.'

There are times my ten-year old son will come to me with a problem. At first, he believes the problem to be "x." However, after we talk for a while, it turns out that the problem is really "y." Once clearly identified, we can set about a plan for resolving the issue.

This is how it is with sales. When you meet with a prospect, they may believe their issue is one thing. It is up to you to ask the right questions to make sure you—and the prospect—know what the real issue is. Then, and only then, can you determine if you have a solution.

They say people buy based on emotion; to alleviate some sort of pain. The challenge for salespeople is to find that pain. Sometimes it is very clear and other times it is hidden.

Unfortunately, many salespeople don't understand this. They believe that EVERYONE needs or wants what they have to sell. It's merely up to them to get the word out. They lead with their product or service—its features and benefits. They spend the sales call talking instead of asking and listening. These salespeople believe that they have to share every piece of information about their product/service to make sure that they SELL the prospect. Then they're surprised when the prospect goes in a different direction.


It doesn't work this way. It can't be all about the product/service and not about the prospect.

The sales process is a treasure hunt. You are hunting for those prospects who have a problem your product/service can solve. First, you identify suspects—people/companies you think might need or want what you have to offer. Then, you try to learn as much as you can about them. When you get a chance to meet with them—ask questions. This is the point where you are trying to uncover the hidden treasure—that pain in there somewhere. The key to success at this point is listening. It's important to really hear what the person is telling you. Listen openly with no agenda. That way you'll hear what they are saying—not what you want them to say. Don't listen in terms of how you can help—just listen.

Once you've successfully found the real pain, determine whether your product/service can alleviate it. And be honest about it!

Remember these critical points:

1. You don't want to do business with everyone.
2. You may or may not have a solution to that particular problem.
3. You can still be of value by pointing them in a direction where they can get their problem solved.

Now that you've narrowed it down to those prospects who have a problem you can solve, explain to them how your product/service can help them alleviate their pain. Your treasure hunt now ends with a successful conclusion—THE SALE! 

By Diane Helbig

***“Sales are contingent upon the attitude of the salesman—not the attitude of the prospect.”***

- W. Clement Stone