

# 6 Things NEVER to Say During Your Sales Presentation

By Mike Brooks



I've been listening to sales reps pitch their products and services for more than 25 years now—and some words, phrases, and techniques still send shivers down my spine. They send shivers down the spines of their prospects and clients, too.

When selling over the phone, all you have is your voice. How you deliver your presentation—your words, your inflection, your pacing and timing—impacts dramatically how you are perceived by your prospects. Unfortunately, many sales reps come off as unprepared, unsure, rushed, and sometimes even scared.

Your prospects sense this immediately. They know from your first few sentences whether they are dealing with a confident sales pro, or with someone unsure of what they're selling and uncomfortable with the sales process. Like sharks, these prospects will attack: they'll blow you off with all the stalls, resistance, and objections in the book.

To project an image of professional competency, here's what not to say during a sales presentation:

**“How are you?”** Stop opening your calls this way! I've written about this before, but 99 percent of sales reps still telegraph themselves as unwanted salespersons by starting out their conversations this way. How do you feel when someone you don't know calls you and uses this worn-out line? Probably like hanging up on them—which is exactly how your prospects feel too. So stop it!

Instead, use a better opening line that differentiates you from the other sales reps calling your prospects. Use something that connects with them, something that focuses them on the call and forces them to think about and interact with you.

A few of my favorites: “How's your [day of the week] going so far?” “Has it started/stopped snowing there yet?” “Can you hear me OK?”

**“Individual.”** Take the word “individual” out of your vocabulary when speaking, emailing, or otherwise addressing a prospect, as in, “I know you're a busy individual...” The word “individual” is an institutional, cold phrase that doesn't belong in a sales conversation.

Think about it: When was the last time someone you didn't know called you and referred to you or your spouse as “individuals”? How did that make you feel? Did it give you the warm fuzzies, or did it make you feel as though you were about to be committed?

Your language must create a natural, conversational tone. Words like “individual” or “professional” do just the opposite.

**“Things of that nature.”** I cringe as I even write those words. Whenever I hear a sales rep end a sentence with the phrase “things of that nature,” I'm certain they have no idea what they're talking about. That phrase is most often used by mediocre sales reps to hide the reality that they don't understand all the details of what they're talking about. It's also used as a lazy way to bridge into other qualifying questions.

If you're using this phrase currently, please consider using something else—or, better yet, explain a few of those “things” and then use a tie-down to see how your substantial information landed.

**Here's what not to say when closing a sale:**

**“Can you transfer me to [the decision maker]?”** Most presentations end with the stall: “Well, I need to run this by my boss/partner/manager/corporate, etc.” This tactic comes as a surprise to many sales reps, who failed to glean this information up front. Some sales reps think they can just bulldoze through the stall by demanding to talk to the decision maker then and there.

I applaud you for your tenacity, but asking bluntly to go over the head of the person to whom you've just pitched is off-putting. Often this person is in a position to influence the sale; alienating them is emphatically not what you want to do.

Instead, try other techniques: “So, John, when you consult with your manager, is this something that you're sold on and will recommend to him/her?” (If yes, then): “Great, how can I help you sell him/her on this?” (Only if they can't think of anything): “Would it help if I spoke to him/her and went over this, just like I did with you?”

That's the way to get permission and ultimately earn the right to speak to the decision maker.

**“I don't know about that. Let me get back to you.”** It's OK not to have an answer for something, but it's also crucial to convey that knowledge gap confidently. Try any of the following:

“That's a great question! We have several ways of handling that issue. Let me ask you a couple of questions regarding your particular situation, and then I'll be able to get the best solution for you.”

“That's a good question for my technical support team. Let me see what they would propose and get back with you.”

“We have a whole department that deals with that. I'll check with them to get you the best solution.”

Each of these responses helps you delay answering until you access the right information—and they also paint the picture of a bigger, highly competent company structure, which gives you credibility.

**“When should I call you back?”**

Why would you want to put the crucial follow-up for your sale in your customer's hands? Asking this question means handing over control of the sale to the prospect, which means you lose control. Here are better ways of keeping control and sealing commitment for a follow-up call:

“How long will that take?” Then: “OK. I've got my calendar open. That would put us at Tuesday of next week. Are you looking at your calendar? Great. How does 2:45 PM look for you?” OR

“[Prospect Name], you're probably as busy as I am, so let's go ahead and schedule a follow-up call to assess progress. I can do this at the same time (tomorrow, Friday, next week). Does that work for you?” OR

“It's going to take me [a day, two days, a week, etc.] to get this started on my end. How about I give you a call around Friday at this time to see if

there's anything else you need? Does 2:15 PM work for you again?”

The key here is to get a commitment. All top producers remain in control of the selling process and know when the next call in the sales cycle is coming up—and so do their prospects!

So there you have it: six things to stay away from during your next sales call. As you use these techniques, you'll find yourself developing better rapport, gathering more information, and staying in control of your selling situations. You're looking like a top producer already! **N**

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