

5 Keys to Winning Presentations

By Mike Brooks

Everything
you need
to close
a sale!

Listen to a lot of sales presentations during the week. Companies send me recorded calls of a variety of sales presentations from many different industries, some lasting as short as seven minutes to others that consist of complete PowerPoint demonstrations lasting 48 minutes or longer.

My job is to analyze them, critique them, and find missed opportunities and ways to make them more effective. Having the full closing call on recordings makes this process precise. I analyze every pause and intonation of the prospect, looking for cues to customer receptivity, interest, buying motives, and possible objections.

As I listen to these recordings, what I'm concentrating on most is the sales rep's performance. The one thing I've always taught the business owners and sales managers I work with is that this moment—the actual time the sales rep spends in the closing arena—is the most important component of their companies' success. The sales rep can improve competence in building

relevant rapport, in hearing what their prospect is saying or not saying, and their ability to guide the prospect through to a successful close. I like to think that's what I can help them the most with.

So after years of listening to and critiquing thousands of calls, here are what I believe are the five keys to winning presentations. As you read these, see how many of these you actually use when you are presenting your product or service if you are a sales rep, or, if you are a manager or business owner, see how many of these keys you hear your sales team using. I guarantee that the closer you can get your team to begin using these keys, the more sales they will make and the more profitable your company will become.



Key #1: Requalify at the beginning of the presentation

One of the biggest mistakes all sales reps make is to assume that just because someone has agreed to view a presentation that this means they are qualified. This assumption becomes even more treacherous when a lead is transferred or set up by an appointment setter. In this case, the closer assumes that the fronter did his/her job and that the prospect is qualified. Sadly, this is rarely the case.

Here are a couple of sentences you can use to transition into the requalification before the pitch is delivered: “_____, before we begin, can you refresh my memory and tell me what you’re hoping to accomplish using our new lead generation system?” or “I can tailor this demo to the points that are most important to you. Let me just start by asking you a few quick questions.”

Then ask some of the basic qualification questions covering areas of need, confirming the decision-making status, the decision process, etc. Getting clear on this in the beginning not only saves you a lot of time at the end, but it also helps to reveal buying motives you should be addressing.

Key #2: Use a trial close before you start your presentation

While this may sound too soon, too bold, or even too pushy, it is the best way for you to get an idea of what objections you will get at the end of the call anyway. This gives you a chance to get the information you’ll need to either overcome them, or, just as importantly, the leverage to move the call forward rather than just ending it with the tired and useless phrase, “When should I call you back?”

The secret to using a trial close at the beginning is to be able to soften it. Instead of asking, “If you like what you see today, is this something you’d act on?” you should ask, “_____, at the end of this presentation, if you think this would actually help to bring you those extra leads you’re telling me you need, is this something that you’d be able to make a decision on today?”

See the difference? One way is the used-car sales approach, and the other references information you uncovered when you re-qualified at the beginning, that you’re now able to leverage here

using a trial close. You can also soften a trial close by asking, “And _____, if after our demo today you think this is something that would solve your lead flow situation, would you be in a position to put us to work for you today?”

If your prospect gives you the common stall of, “Well, I’d have to talk it over with (my superiors),” you can now use a layering question to gain leverage at the end of your call: “And how much influence do you have in that decision process?”

One last way of using a trial close is to ask what the process would be if they did want to move forward: “_____, let me just ask you, if you like what you see today and decide to move forward, what would the next steps on your end be?”

Remember, using a trial close at the beginning of the presentation isn’t about pressuring a prospect to make a decision, nor is it about getting a deal right then. Instead, it’s about getting a jump on any possible objections or stalls that are going to come up later anyway and giving you the leverage to deal with them.

Key #3: Use real world, open ended tie-downs to evaluate how your presentation is going

You all know what a tie-down is: it’s a chance to take your prospect’s pulse and see if they are with you, if they have questions, or if they’re bored



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and you’re losing them. Tie-downs are good, but old, worn out, used-car sales tie-downs are bad.

One old tie-down is, “And that’s a nice feature isn’t it?” A better, opened-ended tie-down might be, “Many clients use this reporting tool to judge the quality of their leads and measure their closing ratio. How might you use it?”

Another old tie-down is, “That would save you a lot of time, wouldn’t it?” In contrast, consider this: “My last client found they saved anywhere from six hours to more using our method. Now let me ask you—if you have an extra six hours in a week, what would you do with it?”

The biggest difference here is that your new tie-downs must engage your prospect and get them to reveal not only their level of interest but also give you information you can use as leverage during the close later on. For example, if you find out they could use their time to market and get more business, then if they object to the price, you can bring the value of the additional marketing they’ll be doing into the equation.

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Key #4: Build a yes momentum

In addition to open-ended tie-downs, you also should pepper your presentation with yes/no tie-downs so you can begin building a yes momentum. Many closers skip this important step. Instead, they just keep pitching, and when they finally get to the end and ask for the order, they’re surprised when the prospect says no.

The way to avoid this is to get buy-in throughout your presentation so when you do ask for the order, it is a natural extension of the presentation. Try using some of these: “Would that work for you?” “Seeing how you do things now, is that something you could use?” “Most people would gladly pay for this if it would produce X, wouldn’t you?” or “I know we’re a little more expensive than others, but based on what you’re seeing so far, do you see how the value justifies the spend here?”

The key is to get a series of buy-ins from your prospect so when it comes down to asking for the order, it isn't a shock to them—or you. Building a yes or buying momentum is easy if you mix in these tie-downs with the open ended tie-downs from Key #3, but you have to use both, or you'll just sound like a used-car salesman.

Key #5: Ask for the order more than once.

In the old days of closing sales, I was taught that the close didn't really begin until the prospect said no three times. Everything before that was just smokescreen and testing to see how much you believed in your product. Now I know times have changed, and I'm not advocating you become a pesky telemarketer, but you've got to know how to handle objections and ask for the sale multiple times.

From the closes I hear, as soon as a prospect says "no" or uses a stall like, "I've to talk to someone else," the sales rep either gives up or seems relieved to schedule a follow up call. This isn't selling. Selling is finding a qualified buyer for your product or service and matching the benefits up with their specific needs and wants to get buy-in. Then you have to answer questions, handle objections or problems, and close the sale.

To do that, you must make a list of your top three or five common objections and stalls and then script out the best response to them. The key to these responses needs to be asking for the sale again after you've used your rebuttal.

If your prospect says, "It costs too much," you can respond with, "I understand that, and let's face it, price is relative to the results. I mean, if this system generated a 10 percent increase in leads for you which resulted in \$10,000 of additional revenue per month, then the price would be a bargain, wouldn't it? Well that's been the experience of my other clients, and since I'm sure you like bargains, too, let's go ahead and put this to work for you."

Prospects sometimes also say, "I'm just going to have to pass on this." You can say, "_____, I know this is something you want and need, or you wouldn't have spent so much time on the phone with me.

Remember, the key to closing is that you have to close.

You have to be prepared with rebuttals to the objections you know you're going to get, and then you have to use them and ask for the order again and again.



Think about it: since this is a month to month service, you have everything to gain from this and not much to lose. Let's do this: go ahead and sign up for our lead service right now, try it out for the month, and if you get the prospects and results I've been describing, you'll be very happy you did! If you don't, you can cancel, and you still get to keep the leads you do get from this. Here's what we need to do to get you started."

Remember, the key to closing is that you have to close. You have to be prepared with rebuttals to the objections you know you're going to get, and then you have to use them and ask for the order again and again. You don't want to be unprofessional, but you have to ask for the order more than once to give yourself a chance at closing more business.

After reading through these five keys to winning presentations, ask yourself how many of these are you currently using. If you aren't using one or more, then find a way to work them into your current close. Make these your own and adjust the wording to fit your product, service, and style.

As you get more comfortable with this more comprehensive method of presenting your product or service, you'll begin to get more confident as well. Soon you'll begin uncovering more buying motives, discovering more objections or stalls before they

come up, and you'll begin closing sales more consistently because you'll be asking for the sale more often. All this will turn you into a top producer in your office and industry, so don't delay. Start using these today and start closing more sales tomorrow! **N**

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