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# Handling Objections in Sales

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# Handling Objections in Sales

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Handling Objections in Sales  
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## Preface

“I’m not interested”

“I’m just looking”

“It costs too much”

If you’ve been in sales for any length of time then you’ve most likely heard these objections more than once!

So how can you overcome the resistance that you face during the sales process? This textbook will cover some of the techniques and strategies that you can use to overcome these objections!

Sean McPheat, the Founder and Managing Director of management development specialists, MTD Training is the author of this publication. Sean has been featured on CNN, BBC, ITV, on numerous radio stations and has contributed to many newspapers. He’s been featured in over 250 different publications as a thought leader within the sales and management development industry.



MTD has been working with a **wide variety of clients** (both large and small) in the UK and internationally for several years.

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# 1. Overview of the Ebook

## 1.1 Introduction

As salespeople, we all tend to dread the times when we need to overcome objections from our prospects or customers. It can make us feel uncomfortable because we tend to think of objections as stumbling blocks, and that the only way to get through them is to bash them down.

Picture for a moment what you felt like the last time you had to overcome an objection. Were you angry? Stressed out? Fearful that you would lose the sale over this nit-picky detail that you just can't understand why the customer is bringing up?

If that's the way you normally feel about handling objections, your mindset is about to change. In this ebook you will learn that an objection is simply an indication that you have not quite finished putting all the puzzle pieces together for your customer. There is either information missing, a concern that hasn't been addressed, or a point that hasn't been clarified, or some other action that you need to take in order to move the customer past the objection and towards the sale.

## 1.2 Overcoming Objections and the Basic Sales Process

In Chapter 2, we'll examine the overall basic sales process. By breaking a sale down into the different stages involved, you can understand the steps of any sales relationship. In this chapter, we're not looking at specific steps that you as the salesperson need to take, but rather the 'environment' in which you will be taking them.

Everything related to sales processes is affected by our environment – the time we are living in, the level of technology available to us, and the general trends that are around us.

Everything related to sales processes is affected by our environment – the time we are living in, the level of technology available to us, and the general trends that are around us. We'll examine how sales tactics have changed over the years as well as the current trends that are common in sales today.

We'll look at a sale from the point of view we mentioned earlier – as a solution to a customer's problem. The process starts with a prospect, not a customer, and builds until you have not only solved the customer's problem that they originally presented, but you have established yourself as an expert source for the next time the customer has a problem.

## 1.3 General Skills Required for Overcoming Customer Objections

In Chapter 3, we'll be looking at the general skills that anyone who wants to be able to overcome objections should have. If you've ever met someone who just seems to be a 'natural' at sales, easily overcoming objections at the speed of light, then they either have these skills as an inherent part of their personality, or they have studied or acquired these skills over time.

All of the skills you need to be a better salesperson can be learned and developed.

The important thing for you to know is that all of these skills can be learned and developed.

These general skills include:

- Listening and Communication Skills
- Problem Solving Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Persuasion Skills
- Customer Service Skills
- Integrity

## 1.4 Identifying the Source of Objections

In this chapter, we'll look at how to identify the root of a customer's objection; they might be telling you one reason for the objection when there is really another reason that they aren't sharing with you directly. Next we'll discuss some things that you need to make sure you have done during your interactions with the customer or in your presentation to the customer – or you will definitely have a hard time with numerous objections. The chapter ends with a list of five things to avoid anytime you give a presentation; we'll refer to them as 'presentation killers'. They can ruin your sale with a flat-out objection to you, not necessarily your product or service.

## 1.5 Handling Objections

Now we'll begin to look at how to handle objections when they occur. We will look at some of the most common objections that customers make and you will get guidance on what to say or do when the customer makes them. Though objections will vary, they tend to fall under common themes or types, which means that you can learn to handle the majority of the objections you'll face by employing these techniques.

## 1.6 More Techniques for Handling Objections

Finally, this chapter will give you information on other techniques for handling objections, no matter what the basis of the objection might be. From this information and the information in Chapter 5, you will finish this ebook with a healthy new supply of responses and techniques to employ the next time that you face an objection from a customer.

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## 2. Overcoming Objections and the Basic Sales Process

### 2.1 Introduction

Before you can address objections from your customers, you need to understand the basic sales process and how managing and responding to objections falls into the process. As we do so, the first step will be to examine the framework of the relationship between the customer and the salesperson. How do they interact? How can you use this interaction to address potential objections before they arise?

The first step will be to examine the framework of the relationship between the customer and the salesperson. How do they interact? How can you use this interaction to address potential objections before they arise?

We'll look at how that relationship has changed and developed over time and some of what the influences for those changes have been. Reviewing this information will help you to understand how important your actions are in preventing and overcoming objections.

### 2.2 The Changing Face of Sales

Like everything else about business, sales methods and ways of overcoming objections change on a regular basis. The way that we sell to customers will naturally reflect changes in our methods of communication and our technologies. Plus, the trend towards globalization means that we have to consider ways of communicating with others who may have very different needs than the customers we have worked with before.

Today, customers expect immediate, convenient, individualized service. If one organization doesn't provide it, chances are there is another choice to turn to.

Customers have changed as well. Today, we as customers expect immediate, convenient, individualized service. If one organization doesn't provide it, chances are we have another choice to turn to. So understanding customers is vital to overcoming the competition as well as the customer's objections.

In Figure 1 below, a comparison is made between traditional selling of the 1960s-1980s and modern selling. You'll see how the way we sell has been impacted by the changes in our modern environment and customer expectations.

Traditional Sales	Modern Sales
Popular in the 1960's – 1980's, though still used today.	How we need to operate in sales today in order to be successful.
Standardized products	Customizable products and services
Seller knows the product	Seller knows the customer and his needs. In a business to business sales relationship, this means also understanding the customer's marketplace and what their customers, suppliers, and partners need.
Seller offers delivery service, supporting information, and training as part of the supply.	Seller helps customer to identify and interpret market opportunities and assists in decision-making as part of the supply.
Value of the seller's offering is judged by the sales price.	Value of the seller's offering is judged by sales price plus non-financial aspects related to Corporate Social Responsibility such as ethics and the environment.
Competitive strengths of the organization and product are based on tangibles only.	Competitive strengths of the organization and product now include intangibles that the organization must demonstrate to the customer.
Supplier only provides the product or service – very limited support available	Supplier now adds value beyond the product or service – the supplier works to enable the customer's business by providing education, assistance, expertise, and more.

Salesperson or supplier understands the customer's needs.	Salesperson or supplier understands – and may even inform the customer on – the needs of the customer's customers, suppliers, or other partners.
Salesperson is the only one who deals with the customer.	Customer may deal with anyone in the organization both before and after the sale.
Organization's focus for salespeople is on acquiring new customers	Organization's focus for salespeople is on retaining and expanding current sales relationships (though new customers are also sought)
Buying and selling are the distinct function of specific individuals within each organization.	Buying and selling require a process involving people in each organization beyond the traditional 'buyer' and 'seller' roles.
Salesperson's authority to negotiate or be flexible in offers for the customer is minimal. Approval is required at multiple levels of authority to make exceptions for a customer.	Salesperson's authority for negotiation and flexibility is higher, though is usually dependent on the salesperson's experience. Exceptions are approved faster and without so many levels of authority required.
The buyer is an isolated function such that his or her understanding of the organization-wide strategy is limited and not discussed before a transaction is made.	The seller needs to help the buyer understand how the purchase will help support the organization's overall strategy in order for a transaction to take place.

**Figure 1:** Traditional vs. Modern Sales

## 2.3 The Development of the Selling Function

Now that we've looked at the main differences between traditional and modern sales, let's look more at some of the main changes that have occurred in the selling function over time. From the first bartering transaction to today's complex, contracted relationships, the way we interact with each other in sales transactions has changed – and will continue to change.

### 2.3.1 Sales from Simple Bartering to Profession

The beginning of sales was simple bartering and transactions. This basic form of selling happens when products are standard and commoditized. Price and reliability are most important to the customer. When transactions will occur is unpredictable and irregular. The relationship between the salesperson and the customer is limited to the single transaction between the two of them.

As sales became a recognized profession, relationship and a level of trust between the salesperson and the customer became more important. After all, if you were going to sell for a living, you'd need the reputation of someone with good products and someone who was trustworthy. This change included the popularization of sales training and sales as a profession was popularized by Dale Carnegie and others in the early to mid 1900s.

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As people began focusing on sales as a profession, people began to study and identify what was important in a sales relationship. They identified some of these things that were important to both the buyer and the seller:

- Continuity of the company or organization and the relationship
- Consistency in offerings and in service
- Sustainability of the product and/or service
- Understanding of the customer's real issues

To the customer, some important traits of the company they do business with were identified during this time as well. These included:

- Continuity in communications with their contacts
- Similar ways in which they want to trade with each other
- Mutual willingness to be flexible and adapt to each other

These benefits, when met, were enough for the customer to accept some kind of price premium, even when there were options available from competition. The benefits helped to build customer loyalty and customer relationships.

### 2.3.2 Management and Information

Before the 1960s and 1970s, sales training and methodologies didn't reflect the salesperson's incorporation of support in management and information. It might have happened incidentally and instinctively between a salesperson attempting to make a sale and the customer, but it was not uniform or part of the average salesperson's repertoire.

Starting in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the salesperson began working to add value to the customer. The selling organization could add other forms of support to the buyer, which would in turn lead to further improvements for the customer and additional purchases from the buyer. Figure 2 demonstrates how this added value influences the salesperson / customer relationship.





**Figure 2:** Impact of Value Added Sales Relationships

#### 2.3.4 Partnership

A natural progression of sales techniques was to move even more towards a 'partnership' with customers. This level of intricacy in the arrangement between customers and salespersons mainly began in the 1980s with the rise of 'outsourcing.' In these arrangements:

- The buyer's and seller's relationships become smooth and regular
- The seller, or supplier, is treated as a part of the customer's organization
- Especially in out-sourcing, once created, the relationship is difficult to dissolve

- May not be a legal partnership, but the relationship behaves as if it were one
- Time is required to develop this kind of partnership selling (often, years)
- Usually includes a great deal of cooperation that is not written or contracted but develops as part of the relationship, reinforcing the partnership

Think about this for a moment. If I need to outsource my customer service function to another organization, I am entrusting a huge portion of my company's operations – an important part – to a supplier or partner. I pay them for the service, and they perform it in return.

In outsourcing relationships, the supplier becomes almost a part of the customer's organization. The intricacy of this relationship will require a longer sales process than those involving a single product or service.

Now it's two years later. I've eliminated the majority of my own customer service staff, at least the front-line employees. Then the company that has been performing the function is no longer meeting my expectations, or they get too expensive, or we simply find another organization that we feel can do the same job for less money.

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Imagine the level of work it would take to un-couple the relationship my organization has with the outsourcing organization. All of the retraining, the organizing, the technical aspects of transferring phone numbers, updating procedure manuals, and making any other changes that are necessary when shifting to another supplier.

The intricacy of this kind of seller and buyer relationship is such that I'm going to want to do everything I can to get it 'right' the first time. This means the 'sale' will take longer than most other types of transactions where there is a single item being sold and purchased. There will be weeks, months, or even years of fact-finding, presenting, overcoming objections, negotiating, and comparing offers before a seller (or supplier) is chosen.

As a partner in your customer's business, you become someone that they are less likely to object to doing business with.

As a salesperson, your sales process in partnership sales will therefore be long and involved, but the rewards for a successful sale will be greater as well. You will be working with fewer clients than in other sales positions, but will be expected to be 'more' to those clients than just a seller. You'll be an ongoing part of their business for as long as the relationship lasts.

You can streamline the sales process by learning how to manage objections before they arise.

However, you can streamline the process somewhat by learning how to manage objections before they arise. By applying some of the techniques discussed in this ebook, you will have the chance to avoid objections, but if you do end up facing some, you will learn to look at them as opportunities rather than problems.

### 2.3.4 Education and Enablement

From approximately the year 2,000 forward, the partnership type of sales relationship has been evolving and becoming even more in-depth and intricate. While partnership selling requires significant involvement, the education and enablement type of selling goes even further in creating the buyer's dependence on the seller as a source of information and assistance. Due to the fact that it is relatively new, not all aspects of this type of relationship are fully understood. But some of the characteristics of this type of relationship include:

- Educational activities of the seller and the seller's organization exceed those of the partnership relationship
- The seller is a facilitator, enabling the buyer to perform at a higher level through the implementation of the seller's products, services, and assistance.

- The seller educates the buyer on the buyer's business in order to help improve their understanding, development, and processes when interacting with their own customers
- Very sophisticated type of selling where the salesperson and the salesperson's organization fulfill the roles of guide and mentor for the buying organization
- Seller's involvement can actually foster significant changes in the buyer's organization through the relationship

The education and enablement type of selling goes even further in creating the buyer's dependence on the seller as a source of information and assistance.

As more is learned about this style of sales, more information will be available about how to perform this type of sales transaction. However, one thing is becoming clear to those who observe trends in sales methodologies. The most successful sales organizations in this time will be the ones that are most capable at enabling their customers' success, development, and competitive positioning in the marketplace.

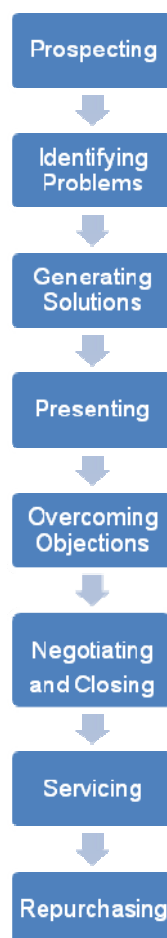
What we have learned so far is that you are a professional with a great deal of value to provide to your customers. The fact that customers will object to your offering should be expected because there are any number of variables that could result in someone objecting. But you can learn to anticipate, manage, and respond to objections starting with the way that you communicate to your customer the first time that you interact with them.

Every time that you contact the customer, you are showing that you are reliable, trustworthy, and a valuable addition to their team. As a partner in their business, you become someone that they are less likely to object to doing business with simply because they have had success in your interactions up to the point of the sale. We'll talk more about how to act in ways to help prevent or lessen objections in later chapters.

## 3. General Skills Overcoming Objections Requires

### 3.1 Introduction

Now that we have examined the development of sales methods and interactions over time, we will look at what it takes to be successful at overcoming a customer's objections. Remember, the good thing about these skills is that they can all be learned. As you read through this information, try to identify where your own weaknesses might be. Then you'll have an idea of what you need to work on in order to improve your own skills. Let's start with a reminder of the structure of a sales interaction, shown in Figure 3 below.



**Figure 3:** Structure of a Sale

You can see from Figure 3 that overcoming objections is usually viewed as coming towards the end of the sales process. But if you can perform the first several steps of the sales process with a mind towards preventing objections later in the process, you will be making your own job much easier. We'll now look at some of the skills that you'll need to practice in order to do so.

### 3.2 Listening and Communication Skills

As we've learned, a successful sales relationship today involves the seller being able to help the buyer identify his or his organization's true needs. The seller helps this process by being able to listen to and understand what the buyer is telling him. If you can't clearly determine the correct solution for your customer, you're going to automatically face objections.

Studies have shown that most listeners retain less than 50% of what they hear.

Good listeners are rare these days. Studies have shown that most listeners retain less than 50% of what they hear. Imagine what that means when it comes to a conversation that you might have with your boss, a colleague, or a customer. If you speak for ten minutes, chances are that you have only heard about half of that conversation – and so have they. No wonder miscommunications happen so frequently!

In order to be a good listener, you should practice active listening skills. There are five key aspects of becoming an active listener. You are probably already employing some of them, but may need to practice others. However, once you are using these tools over time, you will find that they get easier and easier. Plus, you'll learn so much about your customers and have such better conversations that you will be positively reinforced each time you practice.

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**1. Pay close attention.**

With this step, you learn to give the speaker your undivided attention. But you also let the speaker know that you are listening by using acknowledgements – types of verbal and non-verbal tools that help add proof that you are truly listening.

- Look the speaker in the eyes
- Stop any mental chatter
- Don't start preparing your response or rebuttal while the other person is talking (very important in overcoming objections!)
- Make sure your environment doesn't distract you
- Notice the speaker's body language and tone of voice – what are the non-verbal messages telling you?
- If you are in a group, avoid side conversations

**2. Demonstrate physically that you are listening.**

Use non-verbal and verbal signals that you are listening to the speaker attentively.

- Nod from time to time, when appropriate
- Use appropriate facial expressions
- Monitor your own body language. Be sure you remain open and relaxed rather than closed and tense.
- Use small comments like 'uh-huh', 'yes', 'right'.

**3. Check for understanding.**

It is possible for the other person's message to get mistranslated or misinterpreted, so that we hear a message that was not intended. When you are about to respond in an attempt to overcome an objection, you must be sure that you actually understand why they are objecting. So before responding, it's important to check for understanding using these tools. We'll cover some more specific examples later in this ebook.

- Use reflecting and paraphrasing. Check that you heard the message correctly by saying things like "what I hear you saying is...." or "If I'm hearing you correctly, you're saying....." or "I think you're talking about....".
- Ask questions that will help clarify the speaker's meaning. Suggestions include things like, "Can you tell me more about....?" or "What did you mean when you said...?" or "I think you're saying... is that right?"
- Summarize what you've heard occasionally – don't wait until the end or you might not remember exactly what was said.

#### 4. Don't interrupt!

There is nothing good that comes from interrupting the speaker, even if they are stating something that is incorrect. You will only be limiting your chance of understanding the message and responding well because you won't hear it all – and because the speaker will get frustrated!

#### 5. Respond Appropriately.

When you are actively listening, you are showing your respect for the speaker, as well as gaining the information that you need to form your response to any objection. Once you have that information and have clarified it, it's time to form your reply. When expressing your thoughts:

- Be honest and open
- Be respectful
- Be thorough

In addition to listening, you must be able to respond well, whether in person, over the phone, or in writing. When a customer objects, you can view the objection as a request for additional information. Assuming you have listened well and you actually understood the objection, you can now formulate your response. Communication skills help you to remove any barriers there are that could prevent your response from reaching the customer.

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Inés Aréizaga Esteva (Spain), 25 years old  
Education: Chemical Engineer

– You have to be proactive and open-minded as a newcomer and make it clear to your colleagues what you are able to cope. The pharmaceutical field is new to me. But busy as they are, most of my colleagues find the time to teach me, and they also trust me. Even though it was a bit hard at first, I can feel over time that I am beginning to be taken seriously and that my contribution is appreciated.

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Communication skills involve both verbal and non-verbal communication. When communicating with others, the non-verbal aspects of what we are saying are actually more important than the words that we use. In fact, if the two conflict we will automatically believe the non-verbal communication we are receiving over the verbal. So what do we mean by non-verbal communication? Mainly, we are referring to tone of voice and body language. Tone of voice is responsible for about 35-40 percent of the message we are sending. It involves the volume, emotion, and emphasis in our voice when we speak.

Over half of the message we are sending can be due to body language. Body language is a subconscious way that we communicate, but it is one that we recognize in others on instinct. Examples of body language include:

- Facial expressions
- The way they are standing or sitting
- Any swaying, fidgeting, or other movement
- Gestures with their arms or hands
- Eye contact (or lack thereof)
- Breathing rate
- Swallowing or coughing
- Blushing

Basically, body language includes anything they are doing with their body besides speaking. We recognize this communication instinctively, without having to be told what it means. It is important that when you respond to a customer, your body language supports rather than contrasts what you are saying.

### 3.3 Problem Solving Skills

The salesperson of today is a problem-solver who works in conjunction with the customer to identify any issues that the customer has and then uses that information to offer solutions to the customer's problems or situations. Those same problem-solving skills are necessary when your customer poses an objection to your presentation. In this sense, you look at an objection as an opportunity for you to work with the partner to come to a solution. You might be able to:

- Offer a better product or solution than the specific one the customer asked for
- Offer a broader solution that the customer didn't even know they needed or wanted

- Offer additional products or services that enhance your sale and also exceed the customer's expectations
- Identify additional needs that the customer has which you can then offer to resolve with other products or services
- Determine that you don't actually have a product or service that will solve the customer's problem

The final point above may not seem like a solution you would want to offer. But the fact is that telling the customer the truth will establish you as a reliable, trustworthy source of information for the next time they need something, even if you don't make the sale this time.

### 3.4 Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are more than just communication skills. They are the 'people skills' that seem to come to some of us so naturally, while others of us may struggle with them. Interpersonal skills will help you to work with your customers and build rapport with them, and to handle their objections in a professional, stress-free manner. But it will also help you to advocate for your customer with your colleagues across your organization.

Interpersonal skills are the 'people skills' that help you to work with and build rapport with customers, as well as to advocate for your customer within your own organization.

Some interpersonal skills include:

- Courtesy – it's been said that good manners cost nothing, and that's the truth. There is no reason to be anything but courteous when dealing with your customers, even if they are objecting in a way that is less than courteous. Your courtesy will foster relationships and show that you care about making the other person comfortable.
- Respect for others – you've heard the 'golden rule', that you should treat others the way that you would like to be treated. But the true expression of respect is something called the 'platinum rule' - treating others the way that they would like for you to treat them. How would your customer want you to respond to their objection?
- Ability to see things from others' perspectives – if you have a customer who is objecting to your presentation, you might feel as if they have overreacted or misunderstood. But you need to be able to understand your customer's point of view if you are ever going to be able to handle their objection productively and move past it. Your job is to understand – and express that understanding – so that the customer feels heard and acknowledged.

- Ability to understand various communication styles – each of us has a way of communicating with the world, and your customer’s could be very different from your own. These differences could create barriers to relationship building if you don’t understand how they may show up. Since objections can feel tense at first, these barriers could raise that tension level if you aren’t aware of them.
- For example, a person who you perceive as being rude or cold may simply be reserved or shy. Or a person you see as intrusive or forward may simply be pressed for time and concerned about making the right decision.

### 3.5 Persuasion Skills

In today’s competitive marketplaces, customers have a choice in where they will take their business. Persuasion skills are the tools that you can use to encourage the customer to choose your product or service over the competition. Some might say that overcoming objections is all about persuasion skills.

The most important skill in persuasion is knowing how to provide information on the benefits of your offer from the point of view of the customer.

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The most important skill in persuasion is knowing how to provide information on the benefits of your offer from the point of view of the customer. As salespeople, we tend to focus on the features of our offering, when what we truly need is to focus on how the customer will benefit from our product or service. Let’s imagine that we sell alarm clocks – a simple example, certainly, but it will help you to see the difference between features and benefits in Figure 4 below.

Features	Benefits
Dual Alarms	Lets you set a back-up to be sure that you don’t oversleep, or lets you set different alarm times for different people.
Large, Illuminated LED Numbers	Makes it easy to see the time without turning on any lights. Easy to see even if you are sleeping without glasses or contacts.
AM/FM Radio	Allows you to enjoy music at any time, or to set your alarm to activate on the music station of your choice.
MP3 Player Jack	Turns your alarm clock into speakers for your MP3 player for use at any time of day. You can also program the clock so that you wake up to your favorite songs on your MP3 player.
Durable Plastic Casing	This clock can withstand those early morning slaps to turn the clock off.
One Year Manufacturer’s Warranty	Protects your investment. With any malfunction of the clock, you can get a replacement in the first year.

**Figure 4:** Difference between Features and Benefits

When you are facing an objection from your customer, it may be because you have been focusing on the features of your product but not the benefits. You might be thrilled that the Widget 2010 has added a new USB port to the newest model, but what will it mean to your customer in their every- day business? Learn to speak in terms of benefits during your sales presentation – relevant benefits for the particular customer – and you will face fewer objections as you wrap up your sales pitch.

Here are some more tips on how to persuade your customers:

**1. Demonstrate Your Understanding**

Putting yourself in your customer's shoes lets you look at the scenarios they are facing and helps you to concentrate on finding the best solution for their scenarios. When you work with your customer, the interaction is not about you – it's about them. Ask questions that demonstrate you are well-informed about their business their needs, and how your organization can help them to be more successful in their own business.

**2. Generate a Friendly, Responsive Environment**

Don't underestimate the impact of being friendly and responsive. Your attitude in working with the customer, meeting their needs, and handling their requests says a great deal about you and your organization to the customer. Plus, your responsiveness – how quickly you respond to their objection and how well you meet their expectations – will be an important decision point for any customer. One good rule of thumb is to under-promise and over-deliver for your customers. You'll be demonstrating an exceptional level of customer service that they will want to experience again in the future.

**3. Provide Evidence and More Evidence**

You need to be able to demonstrate to your customer that you, your organization, and your product or service are the best choice for the customer. Be able to explain precisely how your offering will benefit the customer in ways that the competition cannot. Give the customer testimonials from other customers and show them before and after scenarios that prove how your product or service has made a difference for other customers and how it can do the same for them. No matter what you do, be sure that anything you share is fully verifiable.

**4. Demonstrate Your Expertise**

Who would you be more apt to buy from – someone who knows the basics about your industry or someone who you see as an expert in your field? As you work with the customer, demonstrate that you understand what you are presenting to them. Share information that shows you understand their field, the upcoming trends, and the challenges people in that industry are facing. You'll instill confidence in the customer to choose your product or service over the next provider.

## 3.6 Customer Service Skills

If you are the salesperson who is presenting to the customer, then you need to take responsibility for the customer's experience by providing the best possible customer service that you can. Sales is a service business – and if you offer superior customer service you can go a long way towards preventing objections because your customers will want to keep doing business with you.

Sales is a service business – and if you offer superior customer service you can go a long way towards preventing objections.

Think for a moment about your own experience as a customer. Haven't you ever chosen to drive longer or pay more for a product or service because you knew that you would get the kind of customer service that you wanted? Don't underestimate the power of customer service when it comes to making sales and keeping customers – many customers are willing to pay a higher price or go without certain features if they know that they have access to excellent customer service people who will be responsive and effective whenever they are needed.

So what does it take to provide excellent customer service skills? The answer to that question could fill books of its own, but here are a few tips on some main points:

- Take responsibility for the customer's experience – from first contact and beyond the sale. Customers might only make one purchase from you – or they might make repeat purchases over time. But even if they don't ever buy from you, they can carry an impression of your customer service with them and tell others about you – the good and the bad.
- Remember that even if you have dealt with the same objection a hundred times already today, it is the first time that your customer is dealing with it. Put yourself in their shoes and try to understand their concern and how they feel it would affect their business.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate. As we mentioned, communication skills are vital in sales and particularly in handling objections. Don't ever be afraid to ask questions, flesh out the objection, and help the customer to understand something they might have missed the first time.
- Honor your word. When you make a promise, be sure that you can deliver on it – and hopefully, exceed what you've promised. Your word is very fragile with customers – it takes only one time of failing to deliver on your word for you to destroy the reputation that you've built with the customer.

### 3.7 Integrity

As in any relationship, integrity is vital in your relationships with your customers. What do we mean by integrity? A simple definition is that someone with integrity acts in accordance with their values and their commitments. This means that if you act with integrity, you will handle an objection directly and address the customer's concern with honesty and sincerity.

A simple definition of integrity is acting in accordance with your values and your commitments.

When you demonstrate that you have integrity, you show that you are someone who can be trusted and that you have the best intentions for your customers. This can make you a valuable partner and a trusted colleague. It can take multiple interactions to show that you have integrity – but, as mentioned above, you can damage your integrity with only one failed interaction. Remember that every time you work with your customer, you have an opportunity to demonstrate your integrity.



## 4. Identifying the Source of Objections

### 4.1 Introduction

Although objections from customers may come in many forms, the reasons for those objections are often very similar. We'll look at some common objections in the next chapter, but in this chapter we are looking at some underlying reasons that customers might object.

An objection is a barrier between the client and their purchase of your product or service, but it is a barrier that can be removed if you understand the foundation of it. One way to look at objections is that they are the result of something that you have neglected to do – which is a good thing because it means that there is now something you can do about it. You simply need to understand what is missing and then respond appropriately.

### 4.2 Identifying the Root of the Objection

Customers may tell you directly why they are objecting, but they might not. They might try to be polite or evasive, or they simply might not be comfortable expressing themselves directly. So it will be your job to explore the objection in order to get to the root of it. You will need to listen to the client – both to what is being said and what is not being said.

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The customer may tell you directly why they are objecting, but they might not!

Start by asking some questions that will help uncover the root of the objection. The exact questions you use will vary depending on what the client says, but some possible examples include:

- What is your main concern with this point?
- Why does that particular concern worry you?
- If your concern were handled, what would the result look like?
- What is your main priority in considering this offer?
- What information do you still need?
- What would the ideal offer for your situation include?
- What are the main factors you will consider in choosing your provider?

Notice that these are all open-ended questions. They give the prospect the opportunity to talk so that you can learn more information as well. You could also focus on questioning in ways that redirect the prospect to focusing on the benefits of your product or service. Some examples of these types of questions include:

- We've talked about the fact that you have a challenge with \_\_\_\_\_. What would it be worth to your organization if that challenge were resolved?
- How would it help you to be more competitive if you didn't have to deal with the problems caused by \_\_\_\_\_ anymore?
- What value can you see in eliminating \_\_\_\_\_ from your daily workload?

If you find that the prospect is not willing to give you more information, you might need to examine other possible reasons for their objection.



### 4.3 Failure to Create Desire

All sales require that your client has a desire to own your product or use your service. If you haven't yet created that desire, you will face objections and not make the sale. This idea comes from the sales method known as AIDA, an acronym which stands for:

- A – Attention
- I – Interest
- D – Desire
- A – Action

The AIDA model is a gold standard sales model that describes the process required for a person to act on external stimuli – not just sales opportunities.

The model refers to the process that is required for a person to act on external stimuli – not just sales opportunities, though it is a perfect description of how sales occur. Anytime we make a sale, we must first gain the attention of our customer, and then generate some interest on their part to learn more about the product. Next, they must want the product – they must see the value in the product for their organization – before they will perform the action of buying.

Once you have the prospect's interest, you need to be able to grow that interest into desire for your product or service. If you find that you haven't developed desire in the customer for your product, revisit some of the following steps.

- With the prospect, identify and agree upon the prospects:
  - Situation
  - Needs
  - Priorities
  - Constraints

To find this information, use a series of questions, being sure to rephrase what you think you have learned so that you can check for understanding.

- Build a level of rapport and trust such that the prospect feels comfortable doing business with you and your organization. Take every opportunity to help dismiss any of the prospect's feelings that doing business with you personally could be a risk. Demonstrate your integrity, your knowledge, and your abilities.

- Understand what the prospect’s other options are for the product or service you are offering. What will your competition be offering? How can you distinguish yourself from the competition? What will the competition say about you and how can you respond to it?
- Be sure that you understand your own product or service inside and out. You want to be able to answer any questions that the prospect has, identify any particular advantages of your product over others, and be able to identify every way in which those advantages can help the prospect.
- You must be able to identify solutions from your selection of products and services, compile a proposal for your prospect, and explain in clear, exact detail how your solution will work, what the results will be, and any areas that might exceed the customer’s expectations.
- Demonstrate that you have taken any constraints into account in your presentation for the prospect.

### 4.4 Failure to Be Perceived as an Expert

Another common reason underlying objections is that your customer doesn’t yet see you as a partner in their business. At the very least, they should see you as a source of expert information and assistance when they need it. If they don’t see you that way yet, you will need to work at reinforcing their perception of you as a benefit to their organization by taking some simple steps like:

- Sending customers information from industry publications or other sources that are related to their business

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- Continuing to receive training on developments of the products that your company offers, as well as any products that your competition is offering
- Attending conferences that are related to your industry and sharing what you learn with your customers

The customer should see you as a source of expert information and assistance. Why would they buy from someone they don't feel truly knows and understands their business?

Once you are perceived as an expert in the customer's field, you will find that objections become much rarer. The customer will come to you asking for advice and suggestions rather than you having to go to the customer and 'sell' to them.

## 4.5 Presentation Killers

It's possible to get an objection from a customer simply because you made a poor presentation and a poor impression. There are five key things that you want to avoid whenever you make a presentation to a prospect. With all of the hard work that you have put into preparing your presentation, be sure that you don't negate that effort by making one of these 'presentation killer' mistakes.

- Having an unprofessional appearance. When you give a sales presentation, you are the physical representative of your company. You should expect that you and your company will be judged by your cover. Be well groomed, organized, on time, and in your sharpest suit.
- Talk, talk, talk. While people say that salespeople really know how to talk to people, there is such a thing as too much talking. Especially if you aren't saying something that is relevant to the customer. Instead of talking the whole time, remember that communication and sales both require two-way action. Keep your customer engaged, involved, and interacting with you while limiting extraneous chatter to a minimum.
- Failing to build rapport. Yes, we just said not to talk too much. But you have to talk enough to build rapport with your prospects. So much of sales is based on relationships – the small amount of time that you take to build rapport with your prospect will go a long way towards making this and future sales.

- Failing to do your homework. Imagine your embarrassment; you stand in front of a room full of people who you have come to present to, only to discover that their business is not a real prospect for your product. Even if you could have offered a different product and met their needs, you have blown it if you haven't done your homework. Remember, you should be the expert that has come to help them be more successful – work hard to keep that image and it will serve you well.
- Failure to keep your ego in check. Remember that as a salesperson, you are a serviceperson. You will undoubtedly encounter difficult customers in your sales career. But you need to learn to manage your ego if you are going to deal with them effectively and still make the sale.

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## 5. Overcoming Common Objections

### 5.1 Introduction

No one likes to deal with objections. It would be much easier if the customer would hear everything that you have said, agree that you are the best choice for their needs, and buy from you the first time that you attempt a sale. But that's not how it works in the sales world. To become an expert at handling objections, you need to learn the following mantra:

*An objection and 'no' are two different things.*

We may be tempted to hear an objection as a 'no' to our offer. But as we discussed in the last chapter, an objection may simply be a request for more information. It's also important to consider that an objection may be a signal that you don't have the correct information in what you have presented to the customer. Certainly, there are times when a customer flat out refuses to buy your product or service. But unless you get an absolute 'no,' you will not be doing your job as a salesperson nor as a customer service person if you fail to address the customer's objections directly.

### 5.2 Common Objections

There are several common objections to sales presentations, each of which can be handled effectively if you remain calm, take the time to listen to the customer, and take the time to respond carefully. These objections include:

- Price
- Selection of your company over the competition
- Fear of change
- Timing
- Need for other input
- Personal politics

We'll look at each of these objections in detail, some skills for responding to these and other objections, as well as some things that you should avoid doing when you are facing an objection.

### 5.2.1 Price

Business is business, and customers will always want to get the best possible price for the quality of product and service that they need. However, you are working for a business as well, and may have limited flexibility in the pricing that you can offer.

Instead of defending your price, focus on the benefits of your product or service in terms of the return on the investment that it will provide.

You could defend the price by reminding the customer what they will be getting for what they will be paying. But you have to be careful about how you do this. If you are too abrupt, you could seem to be defensive. Instead, you should focus on the benefits of the product or service in terms of the return on the investment that it will provide for them. This might require some creative thinking, but you should be prepared to point out to the customer what the savings or increase in revenue will be if:

- Processing time is reduced
- Errors are reduced
- Customer experience is improved, resulting in longer contracts or more sales
- Personnel costs can be reduced or eliminated
- Functions are automated
- Production is increased
- Time off-line is decreased because of your responsive customer service

These are just some examples of what the financial benefit of your product or service might be for your customer. When concerns about price arise, the best response is to point out how much the customer will receive in return. If you can attach actual dollar figures to the savings, your response to a price objection will be even more effective.

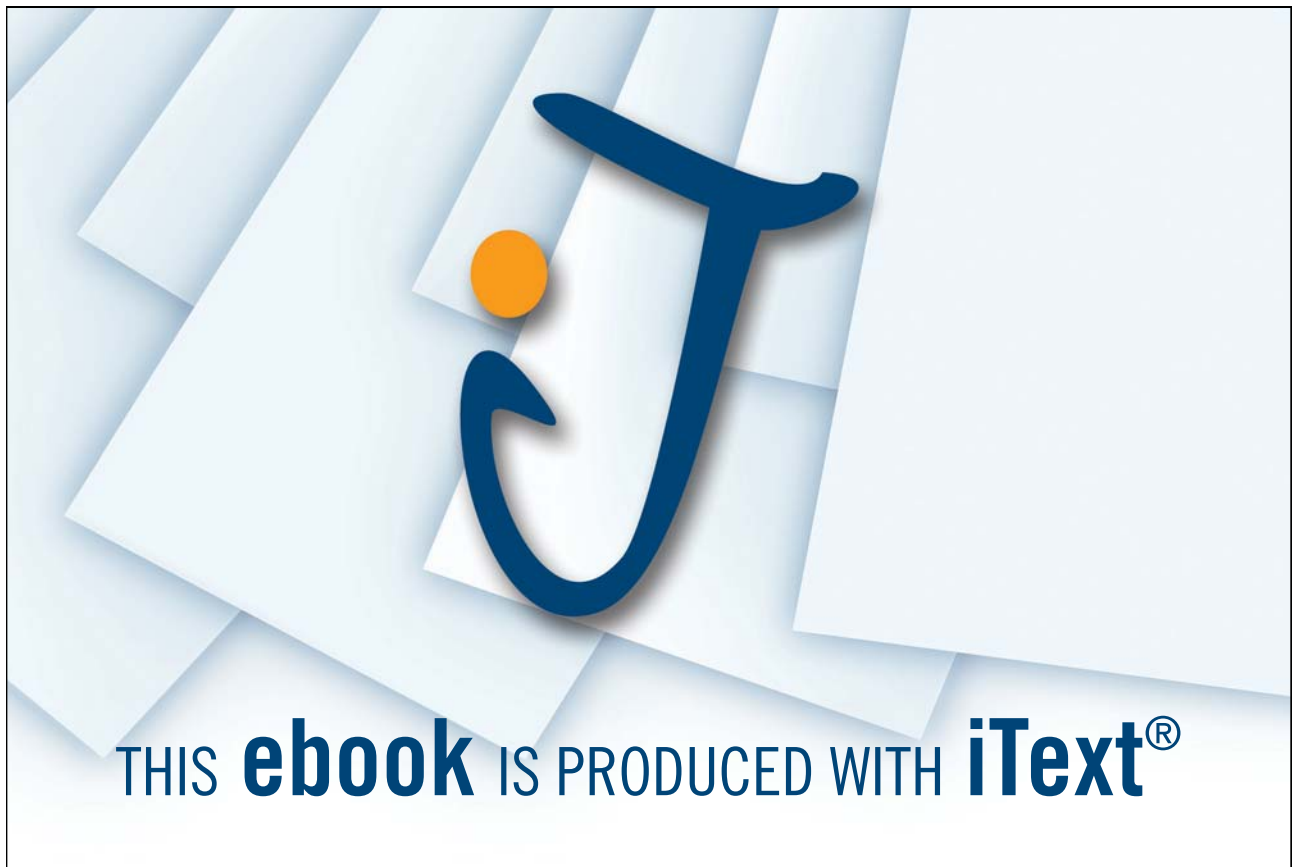
### 5.2.2 Selection of Your Company over the Competition

It is possible that the customer is objecting because she is not convinced that she wants to do business with your company. What evidence have you given to the customer that your organization would be the best choice for their need? If you've done your research then you know what some of the company's values and priorities are. Can you demonstrate that your company shares similar values? This is one way to showcase your organization in the best light for the customer. Consider addressing some of your company's efforts in the following areas:

- Recycling or other eco-friendly programs or products
- Commitment to community service
- Customer testimonials or case studies
- Independent reviews of your product or service
- Industry training, certifications, or awards
- Innovations or contributions your company has made to the field
- Customer service availability and format (online, phone, in-person)
- Positive press on your organization or its leadership

What evidence have you given to the customer that your organization would be the best choice for their need?

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Of course, as we discussed, you need to address the benefits of your product or service over the competition's as well – particularly if you can offer benefits that the competition cannot. Do you know exactly why your product a better choice? If you don't know, your customer certainly won't be convinced.

You can consider both features and benefits when you discuss your product in relation to others because some choices are made on more than just benefits. For example, let's say for the sake of argument that your product or service offers the same benefit as the competition's does. How will the customer choose then? Likely on:

- The features of the product or service
- The market associations of your product (image, brand, cache of the product)
- Your relationship with the prospect
- Delivery timeframe
- Other customer service issues
- Price and financing options

Price is listed last because it is not always the main reason for choosing one provider over the other. Think about it; any restaurant's food can provide the benefit of satisfying your hunger. Yet how many times have you gone to a nicer restaurant because you like the ambience and the service? Consider what your existing customers like about the product or service and you should get some good ideas on what you can tell your prospects about choosing your company.

### 5.2.3 Fear of Change

Fear of change can arise in different ways. It may be that the decision-maker himself is used to doing things a certain way with a certain company and is afraid that he won't get the same level of service from you and your organization. Or maybe he just doesn't want to have to learn a new process, system, or even new address for payment! Your job is now to convince the customer that whatever the fear is based on, either you will make sure it doesn't happen or that the benefits will far outweigh any trepidation that he might be feeling at the present time.

Instead of defending your price, focus on the benefits of your product or service in terms of the return on the investment that it will provide.

The trickiest part about this objection is that your customer won't always admit that there is a fear involved. Instead, the fear could be manifested in other objections. So your best defense against the 'hidden fear of change' is to address it head on. If they are true, be sure to point out things like:



- I'll be here through the entire transition process...
- You won't need to change any of your current procedures...
- All of your employees will be able to learn the new system in just a few hours (and I'll be here to train them and answer questions)...
- We'll adapt to your current billing and payment processes...
- We are available 24 hours a day if you have any concern...
- We offer a satisfaction guarantee...

Brainstorm some of the facts about your product or service that could counteract a person's fear of change and you'll be ready to incorporate them into your presentation or add them to your response to any other objections that the customer might make.

#### 5.2.4 Timing

Businesses operate on a fiscal budget, the timing of which can vary somewhat from organization to organization. Some organizations have quarterly restrictions – or even monthly ones – on what they can spend on their department's needs. If you happen to be presenting to a decision-maker that has already spent her budget for the quarter or the fiscal year, you will get an objection regarding the timing. If this happens, you can respond in several different ways. Some suggestions might include:

- I know implementing this product would require an investment now, but it would save you \_\_\_\_\_ over the time between now and your next budget cycle. (In this scenario, you are making an argument for the decision-maker to consider requesting or making a budget adjustment.)
- That's not a problem. We can complete the order process now and not deliver (or start) until your budget cycle renews.
- I have a solution for you. We can budget the payments over time so that you don't have to pay it all at once. Will that help?

Budget restrictions may be the cause of objections regarding timing.

And if you haven't done it yet, remember to emphasize the return on their investment.

### 5.2.5 Need for Other Input

Ideally, you present to your prospect only when you know that you are dealing with the person who can commit to the sale. But sometimes you will find yourself in a situation where the prospect will tell you that they need to consult with others before they can commit.

This isn't necessarily their fault; they may be under orders to do a preliminary evaluation of each candidate organization and then only bring the top three or so to their boss. Or, perhaps something you reveal in your presentation indicates to the customer that they need to confer with another department or division because they didn't realize your product or service would be impacting that work group as well.

Whatever the reason for needing other input, it can be a frustrating experience to get all the way to the presentation and then have the process stalled by the prospect needing to talk to someone else. You have a few options for dealing with this objection:

- Offer to be at the meeting when the prospect meets with the other party. If you have been able to position yourself as a partner in their business, they may very well accept the offer. At the least, offer to provide any additional supporting material that the other party might need.
- Offer an incentive of some kind if they can make the decision quickly. You don't want to put the customer on the spot, but if you can let them know that you will give them something for making a fast decision, you might just get the sale sooner than you think.
- Schedule a time with the customer before you leave the presentation for when you can contact them again (or present to the other party) so that you both know what will happen next.

### 5.2.6 Personal Politics

The final common reason that people object is that they have a political reason for choosing another company. They may have a friend or family member who works at a competing organization, or they may think that they will gain additional future advantages if they choose your competition. In this case, your only real way to manage the objection is to continue focusing on the benefits of your product or service. At the worst, you will end up with a relationship with a prospect that you can contact again in the future.

## 6. More Techniques for Overcoming Objections

### 6.1 Introduction

In the last chapter, we looked at specific objections that you are likely to encounter and some ways to respond to those objections. In this chapter we will look at techniques that you can use to respond to these and other objections. Think of them as more tools to put in your ‘overcoming objections toolbox.’ You will probably be more comfortable initially with some of them over others; this is natural. But as you continue to grow as a salesperson, keep all of these in mind so that you have the resources you need to effectively overcome objections.

Think of these techniques as more tools you can put in your ‘overcoming objections toolbox’.

### 6.2 Get to It First

The first few times you present your product or service to customers, you won’t necessarily know what objections you will receive. But by the time you’ve been presenting awhile, you’re going to get a feel for what the common objections are.

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Once you have been presenting your product or service for awhile, you will know what common objections you receive – then you can adapt your presentation to include your responses to those common objections.

When you do receive them, be sure to write them down. Then you can adapt your presentation to include your responses to those common objections. In fact, include them several times if you can. Then by the time you get to the closing part of your presentation, you will be much less likely to hear that objection from the prospect.

This tactic can also be useful if you have to present to a ‘front-line’ person before getting to the final decision-maker. If you feel the person you are working with is ‘sold’ on your product or service, ask them if they can see any areas of the proposition where their superior might object. Then you can include your responses to those objections when it’s time for your presentation to the true decision-maker.

### 6.3 Silence is Golden

Next time you are in a sales presentation, when an objection is made, pay attention to how quickly you respond. Chances are it’s immediately. But you can often actually let the customer resolve his or her own objection if you will simply do one thing: pause. This is difficult, especially when we are so attuned to what customers ask and what they want. You can let the person know that you are listening by your facial expression, but try to remain silent for at least five seconds.

Sometimes what you hear as an objection is actually just the customer thinking out loud.

Why? Because sometimes what you hear as an objection is actually just the customer thinking out loud. They may continue and answer their own thoughts, or they might somehow rephrase the objection for you. If they repeat it in some way, it’s time to use another tool. But don’t jump to the conclusion that a comment is an objection. Give the customer time to think through their comment before you jump back in.

### 6.3 Thank Them

When a customer makes an objection, they are actually sharing their point of view with you. The worst thing that you can do to anyone who is sharing their point of view is to negate it or get defensive. Would you rather win an argument or a sale? Thanking the customer for making their point will set the tone for the rest of the discussion as collaborative instead of defensive. It does several other things as well. It:

- Shows that you are listening and appreciate the customer’s input
- Lets you leverage a bit of authority as the expert on the issue
- Gives you a moment to gather your thoughts and prepare your answer

Would you rather win an argument or a sale?

## 6.4 Empathize

Everyone likes to feel that others understand and empathize with them when they speak their mind. One of the most enduring and popular ways for you to demonstrate this to your customers is to use something called the ‘feel, felt, found’ technique.

You use it by using a three-part response to an objection. For the following example, let’s imagine that your customer has objected to your proposal because they are afraid that the transition would be too disruptive to their work place. Using this method, you might say:

- I understand how you feel.
- Others have felt the same way...
- Until they tried the Widget 2010 and found how easy it was to implement. Take a look at this information from Company XYZ. They installed it last year in just two days.

You don’t have to complete the ‘found’ step with an example from another organization, but if you can provide any additional data, information, or evidence, this is the time to do it. Depending on the objection you might point to your customer service satisfaction surveys or awards, your rate of customer retention, your average response times, the return on investment that your product will generate, or any other means of supporting your ‘feel, felt, found’ statement.

One word of caution when using this technique; if you are presenting to people who are themselves accomplished salespeople, they may readily recognize what you are doing. If that’s the case, you could change the words slightly or change the order that you use them. The point is to make sure that the customer feels heard and understood.

## 7. Resources

Businessballs.com. Sales and Selling – Training and Techniques.  
<http://www.businessballs.com/salestraining.htm#changingfaceofselling>

Chanimal.com. Overcome Objections.  
[http://www.chanimal.com/html/overcome\\_objections.html](http://www.chanimal.com/html/overcome_objections.html)

Gayer, Ari. Why Overcoming Objections Can Lose the Sale.  
<http://www.unlockthegame.com/LostSaleorLostTruth/#1>

Gregory, Alyssa. I Object: How to Identify Sales Objections that Are Costing Your Business.  
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Johnson, Emjae. List of Basic Skills that Every Successful Sales Person Should Have.  
<http://sales.about.com/od/hiringsalespeople/tp/basicsalesskills.htm>

Morebusiness.com. Overcoming Sales Objections.  
[http://www.morebusiness.com/running\\_your\\_business/marketing/ah\\_overobj.brc](http://www.morebusiness.com/running_your_business/marketing/ah_overobj.brc)

Natenberg, Todd. Overcoming Objections.  
<http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/Natenberg4.html>

Neyman, John, Jr. 5 Powerful Tips to Persuasion.  
<http://www.submityourarticle.com/articles/John-Neyman%20Jr-482/speaking-2255.php>

Pepper, Adrian. Basic Sales Skills: How Effective Are You at Selling?  
<http://ezinearticles.com/?Basic-Sales-skills:-How-Effective-are-you-at-Selling?&id=214079>