

How to Close the Deal - Perfectly



The go-to place for **management**

by Geoffrey James

I just ran across the clearest description of how to become a great “closer.” It’s in the new book *Perfect Selling* by Linda Richardson, Founder of the top sales training firm, Richardson. You’ll have to buy the book if you want the full instructions (it’s a quick read, but content-rich), but here’s my abbreviated version:

ACTION #1: Know what you want the customer to do before beginning the call. Create a concrete, measurable call objective describing the results you want to see at the end of the call. Example: “Get a copy of the customer’s org chart and an appointment to meet with 3 decision-makers within three weeks.” Or: “Close the sale and take the order.” Avoid mushy, unmeasurable goals like: “Get to know the customer better” or “Build relationship and rapport.” Remember: if you don’t have a measurable objective, you can’t possibly close on it.

ACTION #2: Ask for Feedback Throughout the Call. Ask questions like “How does that sound to you?” and “What do you think?” whenever you make a statement about your solution or capabilities. You’ll either get feedback that will help you better position yourself and your offering, or you’ll get a series of green lights that will let you know that it’s appropriate to move to the close. If you wait until the end of the call to gather this feedback, it will be too late to make adjustments and try to turn the lights from yellow to green.

ACTION #3: Ask for the Business or Nail Down the Next Step. To keep the momentum going, you either confidently ask for the business or (if the sales cycle isn’t over) ask for the next step. If you’re asking for the business, make it simple like: “We can start on that tomorrow; do I have your go-ahead.” Or: “We very much want to support you in this; Can we move forward?” If you’re asking for the next step, position it as part of a process. Example: “We discussed the role of the district heads; how would you feel if we met with them next week?”

The most important imperative here is to maintain momentum. By deciding what you want, moving the meeting in that direction, checking to see that you’re on target, you build confidence that leads naturally towards the close.

You might notice that this isn’t exactly brain surgery. And there will probably be some of you to whom the above is second nature. But the truth is that the ability to close — easily, quickly and consistently — is the single most valuable skill that any sales professional can have. And as with any great art, it’s important to remember, and practice, the basics. Here’s a good place to start: “Closing Rule #1: Think Like a Closer.”

