

Chapter 14

What's Your Current Sales Challenge?

■■■ **As a sales professional you'll constantly be challenged**, but just like learning a new sport or a new craft, the more you practice, the better you'll become (and needless to say, the more money you will make!)

As a professional business coach who specializes in working in the promotional products industry, I teach my clients to **keep a notebook of all the sales challenges** they experience and come up with answers to those challenges.

Here are the sales challenges (and solutions) that belong in every salesperson's Hall of Fame:

► **Sales Challenge: WANTED: A Great New Idea**

Your customer needs an unbeatable new idea for a promotion and you're drawing a complete blank!

Coach's Solution: Tap into industry resources and the Internet

▼ This is where your **friends in the industry and your preferred suppliers** can help.

Your suppliers are your partners for success and will frequently help you generate ideas for promotions. Many suppliers have websites and catalogs that have specific ideas for using their products organized by industry, idea or theme. **Multi-line reps** may also be of help here. **Promotional Products Association International** (www.ppa.org) posts case studies of Pyramid Award winning promotions on its website.

Doing a search on **Google** (www.google.com), by entering the word 'promotion' and a few theme words can be a terrific idea generator too. And if you're reading this **Manual**, you are eligible to join my exclusive email group. Just put your challenge

out there and see what solutions others who belong to the email list have to offer. We haven't been stumped yet!

► **Sales Challenge: The Inaccessible Client**

You know the type. It doesn't matter when you call; they never seem to be there.

Coach's Solution: Off hours, gatekeepers, value of the client

▼ **Try contacting these individuals via fax, email or call during off hours - either very early or very late in the day.**

Make their assistants your allies. 'Gatekeepers' are often the people who can give you information about how to best reach the person you need. They're also a valuable resource in letting you know what will or will not work with your prospect.

If you decide to leave a **voice mail message make it short, upbeat and benefits-oriented.**

Should you ever give up? That depends. If the account has great potential for large orders and repeat business, you may want to call several times during a two-week period, and then give it a break for two to three weeks. Use your instincts.

Another hint is to try contacting people several different ways. Sometimes prospects will respond to an email or a fax faster than to a voice mail message.

Never call so frequently that you become viewed **as a nuisance. If someone asks not be contacted, always respect their wishes.**

► **Sales Challenge: The Very Fast or Very Slow Talker**

If you've been in a conversation with one, you know exactly what I mean.

Coach's Solution: Match tempos

▼ **Communication experts suggest that you match your speed of talking to their speed.** This builds rapport and trust quickly - important aspects of any sales situation.

► **Sales Challenge: The Client Says - Your Price Is Too High**

No matter how many years you've been in sales, this is one challenge you're sure to hear.

Coach's Solution: Value and not price

- ▼ **Although the product may be the same, your delivery, service, packaging and follow-up are how you differentiate yourself.** *Make your product a custom product by adding special packaging, unique imprint colors or logo placement – services you know your competition can't or won't provide.*

Stress the **added benefits the client gets from doing business with YOU**, such as quality guarantees, on-time delivery, product knowledge, creativity and 24/7 tracking. This is where it's of utmost importance to know **your marketing advantage and be able to emphasize it to your prospects and customers**. Remind them that when they purchase from you, it's not just the product they're buying but also the reputation of your company. Enhance your services so that you are more than just a product vendor.

Become an expert in your client's marketing challenges and a valuable resource to them. Concentrate your efforts on the value you provide and not the price you charge.

► **Sales Challenge: The Client Says - We Currently Have a Vendor For Your Services**

Competition is plentiful. Today, it would be surprising to find a new client who isn't currently using a promotional products vendor.

Coach's Solution: Don't knock the competition and stay connected

- ▼ **Never knock the competition, simply ask:** *Under what circumstances would you consider using an additional vendor for your promotions?* Stress that you may be able to provide ideas and resources the current vendor may not offer. If the client doesn't want to use another vendor **ask if you can keep in touch on a monthly basis** to see if anything has changed. In today's fast-paced business world circumstances and buyers change often and quickly.

Ask if you can put the prospect on your email list in order to keep him or her informed of special offers and new product introductions. Of course, if he or she is simply not interested, move on. Plenty of other people will be interested.

► **Sales Challenge: The Procrastinator**

Some people just have a hard time making decisions. Don't despair; there are ways to get around this.

Coach's Solution: Narrow the choices, set deadlines, anticipate objections

▼ **Make the decision-making process easier by not giving them too many choices.**

Also, **set deadlines with procrastinators**. Give them an early decision discount or bonus in order to encourage them to make the decision.

Look **behind the procrastination** to see if there are other issues that may be present. Don't be afraid to bring up other objections that may be on their minds. Bringing it up gives you control of the situation and lets the client know that you feel confident in helping them solve their problems.

► **Sales Challenge: The Reluctant-To-Try-Your-Service Client**

Trying something new can be a scary process. Your job is to put your client's mind at ease, so they feel comfortable doing business with you.

Coach's Solution: Benefits that reassure

▼ When talking to these prospects, **weave in stories about other successful promotions you've done for similar businesses**. Also, it's very important to provide them with testimonials and references from past clients. Quality and service guarantees are key benefits that will help **set their minds at ease**.

► **Sales Challenge: The Client Who Wants to See Results**

In a tight economy, your customers may need to be convinced of the value of promotional products.

Coach's Solution: Benefits that convince

▼ Regardless of the economy, you should always be **selling the return on the investment or ROI**. Although it may be more time-consuming to sell programs and not just products, in the long run you will fare better. Programs are set up to measure the results of a promotion. As a professional, if you want to be a cut above the

competition, show your clients ways to increase business (and produce results) using promotional products.

► **Sales Challenge: The Client Who Pays Slowly**

Some people and companies have an aversion to parting with money, but this too can be overcome.

Coach's Solution: Proactive and informed

- ▼ This is where **being proactive** is of utmost importance. **Before you take the order, discuss payment procedures and terms with the client.** Have all new clients supply current references and banking information and check the references. Remember to get deposits and prepayments, as often as possible.

► **Sales Challenge: The Client Who Says a Committee Has To Approve The Purchase**

When there is more than one decision-maker involved, it can be hard to get a commitment on the order.

Coach's Solution: Be Prepared and knowledgeable

- ▼ Take your case to the committee. Ask to be part of next committee meeting. Volunteer to bring donuts or sandwiches for a committee that meets at breakfast or lunch. Be professional by being both prepared and knowledgeable. Providing samples for the committee to see and feel helps to put the committee at ease with its decision.

► **Sales Challenge: The Client Who's Never Satisfied**

Some people find sport in challenging everything you do.

Coach's Solution: Keep your sanity – and think profit!

- ▼ If this happens on a repeated basis, and you know that there is nothing wrong with the order, and you and your company are not at fault, you may **want to 'fire' the client.** These clients are toxic. They'll keep you up at night and drive you crazy during the day. **And, bottom-line, the client is not profitable!**

In a creative and polite way, tell him or her you're no longer able to work with him or her. Some people are just impossible to please. Move on to clients who appreciate the hard work and professionalism you exhibit.

You CAN meet the challenge!

These are just a few of the *many* challenges you will hear during the course of your sales career. **One of the characteristics of a true sales professional is knowing that whatever your current challenges are -- you can handle them.**

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► *What Can You Do Now?* ◀

- **Create your own sales challenge notebook.** Write down the next sales challenge you hear and then write your answer. (Selling is like learning a sport - the more you practice the better you will become.)
- **Practice role-playing** your toughest sales situations with a friend, colleague or spouse.
- **Change your perspective** with all your customers from: *What can I sell you?* To: *How can I help you?*
- Work with a **coach or a mentor** to overcome sales obstacles and speed up your learning curve! A coach or mentor will help you get results more quickly than you would on your own.