



Are You Scaring Your Prospects Away?

By Jill Konrath

The Stage Is Set For A New, Profitable Client

Nothing warms my heart more than hearing about my prospective client's problems. Because it's so darn hard to set up meetings with decision makers today, moments like this are few and far between.

Is it any wonder that I salivate like Pavlov's dog when prospects say things like:

- "We are really struggling to crack into corporate accounts"
- "Customers don't appreciate our value. They always want us to cut our price."
- "Our last new product launch fell short of our projections."

It takes every bit of willpower I possess not to break into a big grin when I hear their tales of woe. Inside I'm practically giddy from the glorious opportunity that's just presented itself.

While you may think that I'm a sadistic sort of person who takes perverse pleasure in their pain, you couldn't be further from the truth.

Instead, I am their savior!

The merest hint of displeasure awakes the hero within. Sitting astride my white steed, I am ready to swoop into action and rescue them from their dismal condition.

There's no doubt in my mind that I can make a significant difference for their company. My offering is just what they need. And to be honest, I really need their business too. It's truly a win/win situation.

So, at the earliest possible opportunity, I pounce.

Overwhelming Your Prospect

Instinctively, I lean forward, eager to show how I can save them from their misery, restore order to their chaos, and help them reach their unachievable objectives.

Overcome with passion, I babble fervently about my incredible leading-edge solutions. I point out the convenience of our one-stop shopping. I expound on my firm's virtues and commitment to excellence.

My prospect's head is nodding, but his eyes have glazed over. He doesn't look convinced.

Fueled by a burning desire to help (and, of course, to get a sale), I expand on all the additional ways I can assist his company. More and more ideas flow from my mouth. I pull out my brochures, customer

list, and data sheets pointing out the relevant details.

Nothing can stop me now. I see the future. They're happily using my offering. Their problems are solved. They love working with me. They've become a highly profitable, long-term client.

Then suddenly I am jolted back into reality.

Sometimes a simple question wakes me up: "How much does it cost?" Immediately I jump on the defensive as I'm forced to prematurely justify my price.

Other times a comment does the trick: "It's not that big of a deal. Things aren't that bad here." Given what I know about their situation, this seems almost incomprehensible. I'm stymied and don't know how to respond.

I wonder what has happened to my hot prospect. Why is he pulling back from me and erecting seemingly insurmountable barriers? Can't he see that I'm only trying to help? My dream rapidly turns into a nightmare as I watch the opportunity evaporate into thin air.

Analyzing What Went Wrong

If you're like most sellers, you're probably all too familiar with this scenario. What you may not realize is that you scared your prospect away. You created your own problem.

The moment they mentioned a problem, difficulty, or dissatisfaction, you pounced on them so quickly that they needed to protect themselves from the onslaught. Invariably, your rush to a solution only creates obstacles to doing business.

How To Approach The Situation Next Time

How can you prevent this from happening?

You have to change your behavior. Your prospects need to know that you fully understand their situation and care about helping them. While you may think that immediately offering a solution does this, in their mind it positions you as a self-serving salesperson. All they can think about then is how to escape from your clutches.

So what do you need to do? As soon as your prospect mentions an issue, lean back. This prevents you from being overcome with diarrhea of the mouth and keeps you in a consultative mode. Then ask questions. Lots of them.

Find out why it's a problem. Ask your prospect to expand on the issues. Learn how they've tried to address it already. Explore the impact it's having on their operation. Discover the value of a solution.

Then, take what you've learned under advisement, and leave. Before you go, set up a follow-up meeting to either learn more about their situation, or present your ideas.

Make sure to plan those questions ahead of time. It's impossible to come up with good ones when you're under pressure.

And whatever you do, don't go barreling headlong into a solution in your initial meeting. You'll only frighten prospective clients away.

Jill Konrath is a recognized expert in complex sales strategies and creating business value for B2B sales organizations. She is also founder of [SellingtoBigCompanies](#) – a web resource that helps professional services providers, consultants and salespeople win big contracts in the corporate market. E-mail Jill at jill@sellingtobigcompanies.com.

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