

BUILDING PROSPERITY

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THE ULTIMATE BARRIER: HOW TO HANDLE AN INDECISIVE PROSPECT

written by Jim Kahrs

FINALLY AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO HANDLE A STALLED SALE



So there is a sales rep who just cannot get his prospect to make a decision. The rep has done all he can to make the product appealing and affordable. He knows the new system will enable greater productivity over the incumbent system and he's fully certain he has handled the opportunity by the book all the way through. Nevertheless, the prospect simply will not make a decision, and at this point, the rep is just about ready to throw in the towel on the account and mark the opportunity as dead.

Now the question is, could the rep have done anything else to salvage the sale? Some folks around the industry water coolers will say the indecision must be related to price. If not price, then something else is at play here – politics among favored vendors perhaps. But in this case – and many more like it – the rep hasn't missed a trick.

He did the needs analysis. He presented solutions, not boxes. He's even followed up to the point where he knows every key significant date in the prospect's calendar including the last time he had his cholesterol checked. So what's the missing piece then? For that, we need to refer to a key sales tool drawn from the highly successful Hubbard® Management System.

In many sales cycles, it doesn't matter if you're selling a network printer or the latest software package, there comes a time when you face the ultimate barrier – an indecisive prospect. This is often an individual who for whatever reason is oblivious to what could be available to solve his problems or even oblivious to his problems (or what Hubbard refers to as his "ruin") altogether. His department has been using a system or a technology that no longer produces the

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HANDLING A STALLED SALE...

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optimum results for the organization and really should be swapped out for something better suited for that need.

Most good sales reps can easily pick up on this and are able to use that data to create opportunities to present alternatives. An even better rep will use that data to “ruin” the prospect so that he has no choice but to confront the reality and risk associated with indecision. And that’s the lowest level point we’ll start with on what’s called the Awareness Scale.

Ruin. By definition, this is the very thing that’s causing someone stress, pain or trouble. Here’s how it works. Let’s say the prospect is losing valuable time or money with his current platform. We need to get that individual to see and agree with the reality that this is costing them X number of dollars in time, money or productivity. A simple question that needs to be asked is “Do you understand you’re losing \$10,000 a year with the way you’re processing your documents?” If that’s an issue that isn’t painfully real to the prospect, you’ll get no further in closing the sale no matter how good your relationship with the prospect has been so far. The sales rep’s first job is to make this ruin real in the prospect’s eyes.

Effect. Now that you’ve succeeded in getting the prospect to see, understand and really acknowledge the fact that there is a ruin at hand. This is where your persistence comes in. Ask the prospect how this existing situation is affecting him or his department. At some point, you’ll get some response that indicates things are coalescing. “Well, it’s causing my IT guy to spend a great deal of time trouble shooting things that shouldn’t be occurring.”

This is a key moment in the process. You now have the prospect coming up the awareness scale to the point where he has seen his ruin and now he’s fully aware of the problem or effect it’s having on his business or himself. He may hesitate on cutting a purchase order, yet this is understandable.

You as the rep (and opinion leader too by the way) must drive the ruin in even deeper and establish a fear that things could be worse, and that’s the next level up.

Fear of Worsening. This is the point where you ask key questions like “Well, what if this gets any worse? What if your IT guy had to be pulled into another project and he couldn’t handle all of the troubleshooting for you any more? What would that mean to you? How would you get anything else accomplished? Won’t this cause more trouble if you bring in more work?”

The next response from the prospect is critical. “Well, yea, obviously that’ll create more headaches for me personally. I don’t have the time to learn how to troubleshoot a network system like this and we can’t afford to have it go down for a half a day every week for maintenance. That’d put us out of business.” You’re ready for the next step. In any event, it must, **MUST** be abundantly clear to the prospect that this situation, whatever it is, can and will get worse if not handled.

Need of Change. Now you have the trout on the hook. “Well, it seems to me you need to make a change. You’ve got this problem that’s really hurting your company. It’s causing you stress, or it’s pulling your attention away from your immediate targets. So it seems to me there’s a need for change here. I mean, you’re telling me you’re losing about XX hours in down time every month and then you’ve got the distraction involved. So something really does need to change here, don’t you think?”

Typically, the prospect will agree with you at this stage in the cycle. He may actually change in his demeanor, getting somewhat angry at the scene whereas before he was more apathetic toward the whole situation. This is actually a very good

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indicator as now you've successfully bought the individual up from a lower level of awareness to a high position on the scale where he's ready to accept the fact that a change is needed and he may even demand improvement, asking you how soon you can get the leasing agreement approved.

If they haven't actually gone as far as asking for the order to sign, you can simply follow this up by telling him that there is hope and you can help. If done correctly they will be looking for help and ready to move forward.

If you find the prospect hesitating at any point, don't worry about it. Just go back to the ruin again. Don't try to do anything else. Just go right back to the ruin you got him to agree on earlier and work your way back up through the levels. Once engaged in a sales cycle prospects will forget the ruin at times and need to be reminded. How is the lost time affecting him? What'll happen

if things get worse? And don't be afraid to really rub the prospect's nose in this. Your intention is to help this prospect become more efficient or more productive and you have the technology or know how necessary to get him there. The box itself is secondary at this point within the context of the overall scene. So don't depend on product brochures or sales sheets to help you win the prospect over, those won't do you any good if the prospect can't be pulled up the scale.

When applied correctly and with persistence, this sales tool produces remarkable results even with the most difficult prospects in the hands of the most seasoned sales reps. The key to it all is doing the needs analysis necessary for you to know what the prospect's ruin is so you can help him come up the scale, handle what needs to be handled and close more sales without being frustrated by indecision or a lack of confront among your target prospects.

SPEAKING OF SALES...

PROSPERITY PLUS ASSISTS BUSINESS WORLD, INC. IN SALE TO TDSiT

Business World Inc. (BWI) has been acquired by TDSiT. Jim Kahrs and Prosperity Plus acted as an advisor to Stephen Carlisle and BWI throughout the transaction.

Founded in 1976 by Jerry Carlisle, Business World has been a leading provider of office systems throughout Arkansas. The business is based in Little Rock.

Since 1996, Tim Stanley and Total Document Solutions (TDSiT) has been the local source for Xerox in northwest Arkansas. TDSiT is also a full-service IT provider. TDSiT specializes in the ability to provide a high level of service to its customers throughout Arkansas.

"Our intention with this acquisition is to add services, products, and expertise to everything that's already working for BWI customers, so that employees can continue to delight customers by providing them with technology that makes their lives easier and more profitable," said Tim Stanley, TDSiT owner.

"Joining with TDSiT was something that just made sense," said Stephen Carlisle, CEO of BWI. "Tim Stanley and my father had been close for years. Our corporate cultures align very well. I am excited for what our combined forces will accomplish moving forward. This will be a win-win for BWI's employees, customers and vendors."

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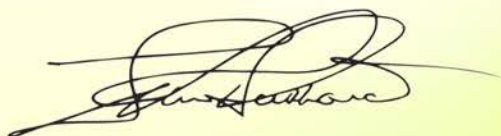
REPETITION OF MESSAGE

written by L. Ron Hubbard

One of the essences of public relations and promotion is that you have to pound the same message home time and time again.

All issuances (fliers, magazines, posters, etc.) on a certain subject should all go in the same direction and bear a similar message.

One is attempting to simply pound home a message. If the message is not smooth, it won't pound home.





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