

# Your Final Answer?

Sometimes “no” doesn’t always mean *no*. Time to dig deeper.

**N**o salesman wants to hear the word “no.” And few homeowners, it seems, want to say it either, at least in so many words.

“It doesn’t happen very often because in most cases when someone invites you into their home at six o’clock on a winter night, they want you there for a reason,” says Joe Mand, owner of Wrightway, in Fond du Lac, Wis. “They don’t want to sit and watch TV with you.”

Generally, Mand says, what you get instead of “no” is a stall. Prospects say they have to talk it over before making a decision. Or they’re waiting for a tax refund. Or that college tuition is eating them alive. Sometimes the car broke down that very afternoon. “You name it, we’ve heard it,” he adds. “No,” in this case, would signal absolute rejection, and

*continued on page 20*

Illustrations: left, Chris Gash; right, Barry Blitt



# Stop Whining, Start Selling

BY DAVE YOHO

The key to success in a soft economy is to sell more professionally.



**T**imes are tough and we’re going to hell in a hand-basket. Think that’s true?

The media seems to. And so might your customers.

The truth, though, is that for you as a salesperson, much depends on your attitude and how well you are trained.

## PROSPECTS WITH NEEDS

Here are the facts: There will continue to be people in your market who need the products or services you sell. It’s up to you to find them and then have the selling system that encourages them to buy now.

Your true role as a salesperson is to overcome objections and other forms of resistance.

If you really believe that money spent improving the home is money well spent, that’s a good start. However, your job also requires that you do a complete needs-assessment on each home you visit, examining in detail the specific needs of the property and uncovering the value system of the owners.

You must present — stronger than ever — the features and benefits of your products or services and show how they meet the needs of the property and the customer better than any-

thing else available in your market.

You must also establish the value of your product or service and show how the investment will pay dividends to the buyer.

## ROLE-PLAY FOR SUCCESS

Today more than ever, you must role-play your product presentation, price presentation, responses to price questions and objections, and the closing story at the end of your presentation. You must aim for and achieve professional excellence.

One caveat: Objections from prospects such as, “We’ll think it over,” or “We’ll get back to you,” are not barriers to the consummation of the sale. They’re simply hurdles you must overcome.

The choice is yours. You can buy into the negativity of the press and the doom-sayers or you can start selling more professionally. —*Dave Yoho is president of the oldest, largest, and most successful consulting group serving the home improvement industry; www.daveyoho.com; 703.591.2490.*

“There will continue to be people in your market who need the products or services you sell.”

*Final Answer, continued*  
its absence is a sign that there's definitely a chance of getting the sale.

"Rarely does a customer say 'no,'" says Mike Feazel, owner of Feazel Roofing Co., in Westerville, Ohio. "They usually brush you off and say they're getting another bid."

**PROBE THE NO**

An experienced home improvement salesperson uses these brush-offs to probe, drawing out prospects to identify the source of their reluctance.

"Instead of 'no,' many homeowners will say, 'I don't think so,'" says Fred Raskin, owner of Prestige Sunrooms, in Chicago.

**“Ninety percent of the time, the customer isn't giving you all the information.”**

Mike Feazel, owner, Feazel Roofing Co.

Raskin says his response is: "Obviously you have something to think about. Would you mind telling me what it is?"

Drawing out the true objection, sellers say, is the point.

"Ninety percent of the time, the customer isn't giving you all the information," Feazel says. "It's nothing personal. Our job is to dig in, find the truth, and build the relationship to where we can be candid with that individual and he can be candid with us."

And when the answer actually is "no," seasoned sellers know that a well-timed question will reveal whether that refusal is the final answer.

"If somebody says 'no,' we try to find the reason," explains Allan Terhune, owner of Atco Inc., in Beachwood, N.J. "We ask: 'What are you looking for us to do differently that can affect this decision?' But," he admits, "usually, it comes down to money."

**PERSEVERANCE FURTHERS**

Skilled salespeople always try to close several times. Even after "no." "It's not a bona fide 'no' until they ask you to leave," Raskin says. Up to that point, there are ways to save the sale. "As a salesperson, you have to try to read the customer as best you can, to say, 'There's a chance I can make this happen if we just get over these couple of hurdles,'" Mand says. "You keep trying until you can make a justifiable decision in your mind that there is no way you're every going to get this." —*J.H.*

**Faux Paws**

Rambunctious pets can be a distraction. Not managing them properly could be a deal-breaker.

**H**ere's a sure way to lose a sale: Show that you're irritated by the homeowners' pets. "If you don't show affection toward their animals, you can really turn off buyers," says Dennis Todd, commercial sales manager at Allen Brothers, a roofing company in Rochester Hills, Mich. But what if the beloved pooch is a pest?

**BE THE ALPHA ANIMAL**

"Use a firm yet friendly tone with pets," advises William Amato, president of Las Vegas Sales Consultants, in Elmhurst, Ill. "Animals are like children. They crave discipline, yet they want to know that you love them. If you do it affectionately, you can get the point across."

Amato — who admits he is more a cat than a dog person — has one particular job where there is a dachshund that he has won over. That has earned him points with the homeowner. "The owner told

me that the dog doesn't normally like men, and she's amazed at how much this dog loves me," he says. "I just talk to the dog, pet her, and tell her how sweet and cute she is. She knows I mean her no harm."

**PET TIPS**

There are other tricks to letting dogs know that you're not a threat, says Tom Slicko, vice president of sales at Prairie Home Alliance, in Washington, Ill. "Don't put your palm out to them; offer the back of your hand," he says, "and don't pet a dog around the mouth or nose. Pet them behind the ears."



Photo: iStockphoto.com/Erik Lam

*continued on page 22*

*Faux Paws, continued*

If Fido is still feisty, ask that the homeowners put him in another room. “I explain [to the owners] that my own dog is a boxer who gets overly excited, and I know that other people don’t feel the same affection for her that I do, so I put her in her kennel so she feels safe,” Slicko says.

You can also blame your request on allergies or a prior bite, Todd says.

**KITTY NEEDS ATTENTION**

Cats can also be a distraction. “The biggest cat pest is the one that climbs onto your paperwork,” Slicko says. “I politely pick up the cat by the middle of the stomach, put it gently on the floor, and continue with my presentation.”

Todd, who owns three cats himself,

says he will also scoop up the feline and give it attention. “I put the cat on my lap and start petting it,” he says. “Either it will stay there or it will jump down.”

Whatever you do, don’t let a critter kill the sale. “Animals can be a total connection point with people,

and you don’t want to lose that connection,” Slicko says. “If you do, the [potential] harm to [your rapport with the homeowners] is enormous.” —*Gabriella M. Filisko is a freelance writer based in Chicago.*

# Leap of Faith

One of your production guys wants to change careers. OK, but can he sell?

**T**his spring, a carpenter and gutter protection installer for Callen Construction, in Muskego, Wis., applied to be a sales rep. Owner Tom Callen felt apprehensive, he recalls, when the five-year employee told him he wanted to change positions.

Management had the employee take a personality profile test — the classic DISC profile — as well as a sales aptitude test. “He came out as a ‘Persuader,’” Callen says, naming one of the personality types likely to prevail in a selling position. “He had the classic sales profile.” Forty-five days later, Callen is pleased to report that his company’s new sales hire is an outstanding success.

**GOT WHAT IT TAKES?**

Many home improvement company owners see installers and sales reps as altogether different personality types, with installers too grounded in the minutia of making something physical happen to be able to enter the mindset where lightning-like shifts in thought may be required to convince reluctant homeowners to buy. “It’s a different person, a different attitude,” says Joey DeMicco, general manager of Renewal by Andersen of Grand Rapids, in Michigan. “I came up from sales, and nobody would want me to install a window.”

But DeMicco is quick to point out that detailed knowledge of product and installation procedures can be hugely impressive to homeowners. And that, plus the desire to offer loyal employees advancement opportunities, makes many companies inclined to at

Detailed knowledge of product and installation procedures can be hugely impressive to homeowners.



least take a chance.

A few years ago, a project manager at Lakeside Exteriors, in O’Fallon, Mo., indicated his desire to become a sales rep. Sales manager Dan Merrifield made the decision to hire him. The newly promoted rep ran leads for five months before he and the company faced a problem: He couldn’t close.

**WALK THE WALK**

Installers may not always be naturals when it comes to sales, but more and more companies are convinced that sales reps need to know, first-hand, what installers do because, as DeMicco says, homeowners “want to talk to a guy who knows what he’s talking about.”

Merrifield considers installation experience to be so valuable that for the past three years — before learning Lakeside Exteriors’ selling system — all new sales hires have begun their training period by spending a week in the field working with siding crews. “We want them out there getting their hands dirty,” he says. “They need to have a knowledge of what makes a job complete and what goes on on a jobsite.” —*J.C.*

Photo: iStockphoto.com/Lisa F. Young