

## **If You Call Me A Good Closer, You'll Insult Me!**

By Gerry Egan

With all due modesty, I freely admit to having enjoyed some success in my selling career. Whether it was office equipment, electronic security equipment, or business services, I've been recognized as the top "closer" in most sales organizations I've been a part of. Yet, the truth is I've always resented that designation. Most of the top sales performers I know feel the same way.

Recognizing a top sales performer as a super "closer" is symptomatic of a dangerous trend in much of today's available sales training, and is a convenient way for poor performers to excuse themselves from the real job of selling. It attempts to separate the act of closing sales from the real process of selling and imbues closing with almost mystical qualities. It assumes that top performers have some secret power or have perfected some black art -- unavailable to average salespeople --and thereby excuses the average ones from achieving the same results.

This "secret key" mentality has spawned a multi-million dollar sales training industry. You've probably seen what I'm referring to, perhaps have been through some of it. It's the "*5 Ways To Close Any Sale*", "*The Seven Types of Prospects*", or "*Twelve Magic Selling Words*", type of programs. While there are patterns you can recognize and presentation techniques you can use to improve sales effectiveness, reliance on these types of programs alone is guaranteed to lead to failure for two very simple but critically important reasons.

First, these programs overemphasize stereotyping of the people we want to sell to. While it's true that some personality traits are recognizable and recurrent, top performing salespeople get to be top performers by treating prospects as individuals -- not as caricatures. Their strength does not come from being able to pigeonhole people as being susceptible to trick a, b, or c. Their real strength lies in their ability to deal effectively with the unlimited variety of unique personalities they come across. This takes patience, skill, and, most of all, practice. It involves the ability to listen and a willingness to understand. It requires an open mind and the legitimate desire to see things from the prospects point of view.

A lot of lip service is paid today to "selling to customer's needs". No training which fails to emphasize the uniqueness of each and every person we call on can help you sell to their needs effectively. Relying on categorizing prospects into pre-packaged profiles to fit a ready-made closing will never do it. Real pros, the ones who are really closing effectively, know this. They don't rely on a magic ability to close. They rely on a

sincere interest in treating prospects as individuals and then let the prospect close themselves.

The second reason most sales training programs fail is they don't address the real job of selling. Most are built around how to close the sale. They treat closing as somehow apart from the process; a separate event; an obstacle to the sale that must be overcome. Top sales performers know that nothing is farther from the truth. Closing is simply the natural result of everything that preceded it. Conversely, failing to close -- or objections at closing -- are the same thing.

Invariably, top sales performers have become top performers by learning that no "magic" closing technique can make a poor prospect want to buy their product. They've learned instead that good sales closings occur with good prospects -- and therein lies the real secret of sales success.

Without fail, top performers -- the ones designated "closers" -- are top prospectors. Nothing you can do will improve your closing ability as much as improving your prospecting ability. The more prospects you call on, the more likely you are to find high quality, ready-to-close prospects. Abundant and effective prospecting will quickly turn a salesperson of modest ability into a super closer and a top performer.

This is why I resent people who write me off as a good closer. Though intended as a compliment, it totally ignores the planning, practice, and effort I put into prospecting. Like most other top performers I know, in every organization in which I've been a top closer I've been the top prospector too. My best sales results have come as the result of out cold calling other salespeople by a factor of two or three to one.

In short, prospecting is the selling process. Closing is simply the natural result of good prospecting. Any salesperson can become a champion prospector. All it takes is a change of attitude. You need a new way of looking at selling and a new way of looking at cold calls.

If you'd like to hear more about this call or write me, or ask your sales manager to do so. For our regular vendors we can present a sales training session in your office that can change the way you look at prospecting in less than ninety minutes. When you look at it differently, you'll do it differently. And when you prospect well, you'll close better ... And that's the truth about closing!

-- Gerry Egan