

# ASK FOR PERMISSION

When giving control away gains you so much more

**D**oes this sound like a strange thing to do? Should you actually try to give control away!

For decades, most of the sales theory you have heard and training seminars you have attended suggested you must always keep control of a sales situation to gain a successful outcome. The more you manoeuvre and lead the client, the more likely it is you will gain the desired end – a successful sale.

But in today's climate, clients are becoming far more savvy. Individuals are increasingly resistant to 'being sold'. The time has come to look for tactics outside the traditional sales model.

There is a simple method that turns traditional sales philosophy on its head. What's more, it does not matter if you have sales experience. It works for people who are uncomfortable with the idea of selling or who lack professional sales training.

As alien as it may sound, the key to this concept is to give the control back to the client. We call this quite simply 'asking permission'. It may seem that by handing

over the power in the conversation, you are losing your control. However, you will find that once given the ability to control the conversation, your clients will almost always hand the lead in the conversation straight back to you.

The process for asking permission is quite simple. At different stages throughout your sales process, simply ask permission from the client before proceeding to the next stage. This very simple act will greatly increase your chances of making a successful sale.

Your sales process will have natural breaks, points where you pause before moving on to the next portion of the conversation. It is at these break points that you need to stop and ask the client for permission to continue. This allows the client to acknowledge acceptance of what has been said so far and gives them the authority to allow you to continue. They feel that they are in control. It also ensures that there are no objections or confusion with what has been said thus far.

The best way to demonstrate just how easy it is to add this to your conversations with clients is to look at some examples:

You might normally say, *"Thanks for making the time to see me. Let me tell you how we work."*

Try saying instead, *"Thanks for making the time to see me. Would it be okay if I tell you how we work?"*

Or how about, *"That is very interesting. What I'd like to do now is..."*

This could become, *"That is very interesting. If it's okay with you, what I would like to do now is ..."*

And one last one, *"Well, I think we have everything we need for me to proceed."*

This could become, *"Well, I think we have everything we need for me to proceed. Is that okay with you?"*

The simple act of asking permission achieves a number of sales objectives.

## No hard sell

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guidance. This makes for a much happier, confident client. It increases the likelihood of repeat business and will most likely land you with some referrals from some of their friends.

It is also a more comfortable selling process for people with little or limited sales experience. It is not a 'hard' sell, but instead focuses on the 'customer first'.

The simple act of handing control back to a client allows them to be an active partner in the sales process. They will usually hand the conversation straight back to you by saying that it is indeed okay to proceed. So, in reality, you never actually lose control. Instead, you help to solidify a partnership.

Making yourself vulnerable in this way can actually enhance your own credibility. It shows the client that you are willing to give them the right to say yes or no.

### Form relationships

By giving this control back and involving your client, you actually deepen the relationship with them significantly. The reality is they need to connect with you at an emotional level before they will buy from you. Anything that enhances this relationship and connection moves you in the direction of a more successful sales outcome.

### Reduce fears

One of the greatest fears that sales people have, both experienced and less experienced, is that they will say the wrong thing or jeopardise the relationship and end the sales opportunity. By simply asking permission, you get reinforcement from your client at

every stage of your process.

This naturally increases the customer's satisfaction and decreases the likelihood that they will stop the sales process with you.

### Allow objections

Uncovering objections from a client can be difficult, especially for those with little training and experience. With this new approach, asking permission periodically to continue allows your client to interpret what they have just heard and voice their concerns or questions.

Once again, the less experienced sales professional may have some fear of objections. But the reality is you need to handle them. You will never successfully complete your sales transaction until you acknowledge and respond to every objection.

It is essential therefore, to have a system that uncovers any concerns without putting too much pressure on the client. If your client is not given the opportunity to voice his or her worries – you may end up with a flat 'NO' instead of a sale, without ever knowing why.

### Closing the sale

By building the relationship and proceeding by asking permission, you will naturally progress towards a successful outcome. It becomes much more of an assumptive aspect and far less a technique you have to work on.

Asking permission is so effective. It can form a mini-sales process in its own right and is exceptionally useful for those without a lot of sales practice.

### Give control – gain the sale

Perhaps you would feel a bit silly continuously asking if you may proceed.

My suggestion would be that you wait until the end of a particular part of your sales process and use it as a way of rounding out that process, uncovering the objections, cementing the relationship and making sure the client is completely happy with everything before moving on.

In this way, you tick the box for each step of your sales process until you reach the end. At this point you can be reasonably confident that you have done a good job from start to finish. You have uncovered and dealt with any concerns. You have developed a relationship and are now able to head fairly easily and effortlessly toward the close of the sale.

By giving the power back to the client – who will most likely give it straight back to you – you allow them to feel like they are in the lead and have made their own decisions, having been actively involved in the process.

So remember, give a little – get a lot.

**Bill James is Managing Director of Inspired Learning Systems Ltd. He is internationally recognised for his ability to show others how to 'find and land' new business with easy to understand and easy to use ideas.**

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