

Sales closing: the theory and practices

Introduction

This article is part of our [sales guide for contractors](#).

In this article we describe how 'sales closes' work.

As a contractor, there are two situations where you will need to close business. The first when securing an interview via an agent, and the second when you are at the interview with the potential client.

What is a 'Sales Close'

For sales people all over the world, closing is often the most exciting and daunting aspect of writing business. Closing in essence is when and how you ask for the business. For most accomplished sales people, closing is the part of sales they look forward to the most and once you begin to enjoy closing – you close a lot more!

Much has been written on the art of closing and there are many well know techniques employed that are effective and at the same time can be quite easily recognisable, as long as you know what you are looking for.

Closes also often work differently in different market sectors. In the domestic markets, the most aggressive and manipulating closes exist. These closes however do not often work in the high level commercial world as more often than not, the buyer is trained to recognise them and so they may have an adverse effect.

Listed below are some of the most common closes:

“ Closing in essence is when and how you ask for the business ”

Assumptive close

This close involves the sales person never actually asking their customer if they want to buy the product. Instead, they appear to assume that the customer is going to buy and says something like:

'so, I will now send this to our delivery department and your product will be delivered in three working days'. It is now down to the customer to protest that they have not even indicated that they are interested in buying.

You will be surprised by how easy it is to be caught up in the moment and be carried along with the sale. This can even intimidate customers where they do not feel like they want to disagree with the sales person's assumption. This close is all about manipulating you into buying – be wary of it!

An example of an assumptive close an agent might use on a contractor is 'I've spoken to the client, he is happy for you to start the contract, and I've agreed with him that you will start on Monday.'

An example of an assumptive close a contractor might use on an agent is 'I'm perfect for the role and am happy to be interviewed tomorrow at 9am.'

Alternative close

A close relative of the 'assumptive close', this close is often used along side it. Again, the alternative close dictates that the sales person never actually asks their customer if they would like to buy the product. Instead, they will offer an alternative such as: 'would you like to pay for this by cash or credit card'.

Again, this manipulates the customer into trying to make them feel that they have already agreed to buying, it is just the payment terms that are being discussed. As with the close above – be cautious of any sales person using this close.

An example of an alternative close the agent might use is 'I've spoken to the client, he is happy for you to start the contract, would you prefer to start on Monday or Tuesday?'

An example of an alternative close the contractor might use is 'I'm perfect for the role and look forward to an interview, would you prefer the morning or afternoon?'

Silent close

This is a fascinating aspect of closing and as unlikely as it sounds – it really works.

There is a saying in sales that says 'he who speaks first, loses'. The silent close is based upon this kind of psychology.

When the sales person has made their final closing statement, they are taught to be silent immediately afterwards. If an uncomfortable silence follows, the sales person must remain silent.

The theory here is that whoever speaks first will lose. There have been many documented cases of sales where agonizing minutes have passed on the telephone before someone speaks and it is at first not easy to hold your nerve in such situations. Should the meeting be face to face, the sales person must continue to look straight at their customer, not appearing too aggressive and not too passive.

Of course the silent close does not always work, but be aware that it exists and that it does have an effect. The next time you find yourself in negotiation and a silent close is used, you know the rules – do not be the one to speak first!

An agent might use a silent close on a contractor when asking what rate they would be prepared to accept. They will listen to your answer but remain silent afterwards, waiting to see if you crumble and offer a lower rate.

A contractor can use a silent close on an agent in a similar manner when asking what rate the client is prepared to pay. After the agent names a price, the contractor can remain silent hoping that the agent will crumble and offer a higher rate.

Refractive close

This close is unethical, but you may have even come across this one already. This is where the sales person says: 'please buy the product, I have a family of eight and my boss will fire me if I don't make this sale'.

Of course, the sales person's personal circumstances should have nothing to do with a sale and if they are using this close – there is a good chance there is no truth to the statement either. Be influenced by a balanced view of the product and your reasons for buying, do not allow yourself to be manipulated in this fashion.

Within the contracting world it is uncommon to come across it. If you do, then be very cautious when dealing with that agency.

Summary

Above are some of the most common and interesting closes, but closing is an enormous aspect to sales and can not be learnt overnight. Often good sales people close well purely because they have good presence and communicate confidently and in an effective way. Confidence is really what we as customers want to see. When you buy from someone who looks nervous, you feel nervous about the sale. The opposite is also true.

Try to be aware of what closing is and know when you are in a closing situation. This will prevent you as far as possible from being manipulated or tricked. For sales people, closing is fun. After all, it really is all about asking for the business.

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