

Do you ever wonder why some tele-sales reps consistently outperform others? Scratch the surface and you'll discover that top reps are extraordinarily effective at closing the sale. They are effective because they apply the same process –habits- that make closing faster, easier and ultimately more successful.

This Special Report outlines those habits. Follow them consistently and you'll close more sales more often!

SPECIAL REPORT: The 7 Closing Habits of Highly Effective Tele- Sales Reps

How to be more successful at closing sales (and generating more revenue)

Jim Domanski – www.telesalesmaster.com

SPECIAL REPORT:

The 7 Closing Habits of Highly Effective Tele-Sale Reps

Ever notice that some tele-sales reps consistently out sell other reps?

Why is that? Why do some reps continuously lead the pack in terms of sales and revenues and others don't?

Sure, knowledge and experience play a role in their success, but when you scratch the surface you quickly discover that highly effective tele-sales reps all have one thing in common: they are exceptionally good closers.

They know precisely how to get the client to commit, take action and buy the product. This is not an accidental trait. It's a habit they have formed. In fact, there are seven closing habits that highly effective reps share. Here is the first.



Habit #1: Great Closers are Prepared for the Close

Hide behind a corner in your office and watch a top closer. Very rarely do you see them pick up the phone and start dialling and smiling. What you'll see is that virtually every top closer takes

a few extra seconds to plan out their call on a pad of paper.

A good closer begins by assuming a sale has been made and then works backwards from the point. They ask themselves, 'what must be done to get me here?' While each rep will have their own individual approach they all focus on three core components of the call:

Objectives

First, highly effective closers have two sets of well-defined objectives.

Primary objectives are those objectives that they want to achieve on that particular call. Depending on the situation, the primary objective is often to get the sale – dollars in the door. But not always. For example, the primary objective might be to get the prospect to attend a webinar. The primary close is not the monetary sale but rather the commitment to the webinar. The sale might come next. Whatever the case, the rep knows the end game of that call and writes it down. This sets the tone for the rest of the planning.

Great closers also have secondary objectives. A secondary objective could be a contingency objective. For example, the primary objective might be to close the monetary sales but failing that, a webinar might be the contingency objective. A secondary objective might also be an action that the closer would like to accomplish in addition to the primary objective. Perhaps it is a cross sell or a referral.

The Strategy

Once the objectives are clear, the next step is defining a strategy. A strategy is nothing more than the 'way' the objective will be achieved.

Typically, a good closer will address three issues.

Questions -Prior to the call, a highly effective closer will have a handful of key questions that are designed to direct the client's thinking. Almost like signposts, these pre-planned questions point to the challenges or the opportunities that a client might be experiencing. These are the motivators that must be tweaked if a successful close is to occur. Motivators are what get a prospect to take action ... and hence, buy.

Selling Points - An effective closer will jot down the key selling points that will have the strongest impact on the prospect. Usually in bullet form, the selling points revolve around the ultimate benefits the prospect will derive. Writing them down on a sheet of paper ensures that they will not be forgotten or diluted when presented.

Objections – Finally, great closers are never caught off guard. They will note the major objections that he or she is likely to encounter and are prepared to respond accordingly.

The Close or the Advance

The third area that closers focus upon when planning is the 'close' itself. Top closers are not hesitant about writing down a closing phrase or two. For instance, "Would you like to give it a shot," or "When would you like to get started?" "How many do you need?" The act of writing the close imprints the close on the mind of the rep and increases the likelihood that it will happen.

Similar to secondary objectives, highly effective closers prepare a backup 'close' – called an advance – which they can apply if closing the monetary sale is premature. An advance is

action that the client agrees to take (e.g., attending that webinar) by a given date and time. Effective closers do not say, "Attend the webinar next week and I'll give you a call later on." Effective closers say, "Let's sign you up for the Webinar on Tuesday, the 9th at 11:00 a.m., and I will give you a call to discuss the session and the next steps, later that afternoon...how does 2:15 look on your calendar?"

Summary

Highly effective closers begin with the 'end in mind' (as Stephen Covey might say). They know precisely what they want to achieve from the call and have a written plan on how they are going to achieve it. Having a call road map is the first step to a higher closing rate.



Habit #2: Effective Closers Recognize Buying Signals

Highly effective closers are acutely tuned into buying signals.

A buying signal is anything that a prospect says that indicates a legitimate interest in purchasing the product. Buying signals are sign posts that indicate if the call is on the right track. Closers follow the signs.

Buying Signals 101

Okay, here's the skinny on buying signals. First of all, buying signals don't necessarily occur at the end of the call. Depending on the situation, a client can indicate interest at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the call. So what

that really means is that you have to be tuned in 100% of the time. Missing a sign post at the beginning of a call may take you away from your final closing destination. Following at buying signal at the beginning of a call may act like a secret path and take you to the close immediately

Next, buying signals come in hot, medium and mild. In other words, some buying signals are stronger than others. When the client speaks as though she has already taken possession of the product, you have a hot signal. On the other hand, if the client simply says, "That's interesting" in a non-committal manner, it's mild. Highly effective closers understand this and can separate the two.

Third, a lack of a buying signal doesn't necessarily mean the client is not interested but your spider senses should be tingling. Great closers will actively solicit a buying signal to assess where they are on the trail. (More on that in Habit #3: Trial Closes)

And finally, buying signals over the telephone fall into two categories: verbal and tonal.

Verbal Buying Signals

Verbal buying signals are questions or statements from clients that indicate specific interest.

"Will that integrate with my current software?"

"So there is absolutely no charge for the trial?"

"That would be easy for us to implement..."

"What sort of support do you provide?"

"That sounds interesting..."

"That's a neat feature!"

"Can it be leased?"

"How long does implementation typically take?"

Another verbal buying signal is when the client speaks as though he or she has already taken possession of the product or service.

"So, when we are ready, you'll do the training, right?"

"How often will I get updates?"

"So, we'll get unlimited access to the resource center, correct?"

"I'd need to speak to our IT guy to see if there's room on the server."

"So after you give the training you can show us how to coach?"

Tonal Buying Signals

Tonal verbal signals are "sounds" that prospective buyers make that indicate interest or value. Unfortunately, trying to provide a tonal example in a written format such as this article is a bit of a challenge but I think you know what I am talking about, don't you?

For example, suppose you make a key point and you hear a positive "Ohhh..." This suggests a sense of delight or interest. It's a buying signal. Similarly, if you hear a thoughtful "hmmm..." chances are the prospect is contemplating the benefits of ownership.

The effective closer listens for these indicators because she doesn't have the benefit of face-to-face contact.

Summary

Highly effective closers are keenly aware of buying signals. Of course, it is not enough to recognize a buying signal. You need to do something with it. Leverage it. Shape it. Use it. And that's where the third habit kicks in. A great closer uses trial closes to make the most of the signal. See the next article in the series.



Habit #3: Good Closers Use "Trial" Closes

Highly effective and successful tele-sales reps routinely use trial closes in their selling conversations. Do you?

A trial close is a 'test balloon' that you float up during a sales call to gauge client interest, to ensure that you are on track and to determine if you can move to the final close. On the telephone, a trial close is particularly critical because you do not have the visual clues that you would normally get face to face. The very best tele-sales reps fabricate those clues by using trial closes.

Passive Trial Closes

There are two kind of trial closes: passive and assertive. Both are valuable and service different purposes. A passive trial close is more 'gauge-like' and seeks to determine if the client is following your point. Passive trial closes are deliberate sign posts that you toss out to ensure you are going in the right direction.

For example, suppose you provide a feature and benefit about your product or service. At the conclusion, you might say, "Does that make

sense?" or "Do you see how that might work for you?"

Questions like these assess client's interest and comprehension. The moment after you ask, stop talking and listen closely. Listen not only to what the client says but the tone in which it is delivered. If the client sounds doubtful or uncertain, you need to stop, go back and clarify. For instance,

"Hey Jim, I hear a bit of doubt or uncertainty in your voice. Is there something I can clear up?"

The trick to being more effective in closing in telesales is to liberally sprinkle these test closes throughout your conversation.

Assertive Trial Closes

The second trial close is the assertive close. As the name implies the assertive close is much more directive and sales focused. It seeks to determine if the interest to BUY is strong or potentially strong. This type of trial close often uses a hypothetical question:

"Wendi, suppose we could provide 3-day delivery on this item, would this be something you'd consider purchasing?"

"Mark, putting price and budget aside for a moment, does the solution I am presenting sound like something you could work with?"

"Chris, let me ask you a hypothetical: if we could stock those items on a regular basis would you move your business over to us?"

Note that these questions have an "if/then" kind of approach. They get the client to project or to imagine a certain scenario. If that scenario

is positive and the client agrees to it, the chances of closing the sale are much more significant.

Danger

Assertive trial closes can make some clients feel uncomfortable. Some can see the question as “cheesy”, “salesy”, “manipulative” or “pushy.” (These are actual client remarks) The client can feel as though they are being painted into a corner and this can lead to strong resistance or resentment.

Mitigating the Risk – Softening Phrases

Despite the risk, assertive trial closes are extremely valuable because they gauge INTENT. The trick is to ask the question without being quite so blunt. And it’s easy to do. Here’s how:

“Chantal, I don’t mean to put the cart before the horse, but suppose for a moment that we could...”

“Yvon, I’m not sure where you are in the decision making process, but let me ask you a hypothetical question...”

“Maria, not to put you on the spot and not to be presumptuous, but I’m curious, if I was to ...”

Notice how these trial closes are softened with the addition of a few words and phrases. They acknowledge that the remark might be a bit bold.

Summary

Here’s the bottom line, highly effective closers keep track of client interest and concern throughout the entire sales conversation by asking questions that ‘test the waters.’ Depending on how the client responds, the

good closer knows when to accelerate to the final close or when to slow down or even reverse. Trial closes are vital. Use them and watch your sales grow.



Habit #4: Effective Closers ASK for the Sale

Okay, here’s where the rubber really hits the road.

After preparing for a call, after keeping an ear out for buying signals AND after using test closes to gauge client interest, top closers simply ASK for the sale.

It seems kind of ridiculous to hammer this point home because it’s so dang obvious but good closers ARE good closers because they unfailingly ask for the sale. They don’t sit on their hands and hope for a sale. They don’t wait for the client to raise their hand and volunteer to buy.

They seize the moment.

Here are five closing techniques that top closers use. Three are ‘classic’ closes and two are ‘nouveau’ closes.

The 3 Classic Closing Techniques

1. The Direct Close

The name says it all. The direct close is just that: direct and to the point. There is no confusion about what the tele-sales rep is asking. I find the very best closers tend to use direct closes most often. For instance,

“So, Mark, would you like to place that order now?”

“Bevin, would you like to purchase the software?”

Because it is so ‘black and white,’ it gets the prospect to give a definitive answer one way or another. It’s quick and easy.

2. *The Assumptive Close*

The assumptive close assumes the sale has been made, and the tele-rep closes on a smaller issue. The theory is that the client is no longer making a major ‘buying’ decision but rather a minor ‘administrative’ decision. For example,

“Carson, how many would you like?”

“Okay Morgan, I can get those out on today’s truck.”

The assumptive close is probably the most popular closing technique. It doesn’t seem as ‘assertive’ as the direct close so it appeals to a broader base of tele-sales rep. Who cares as long as it works?

3. *The Choice Close*

The choice close is really an assumptive close with options. Here again, the theory is the client is making a decision on two administrative points rather than on a major purchase:

‘Would you like to begin with the 3-pack or the 5-pack?’

“Would you like overnight delivery or 3-day ground?”

The 12 ‘Nouveau’ Closing Techniques

If you’re not French or ‘hip’, nouveau means “new.” These two techniques seem to work exceptionally well in a tele-sales situation.

1. *“Give it a Shot” Close*

This close is simple but a highly effective close. Assuming that you’ve presented your solution to their needs, you close by saying,

“So, Janis, would you like to give it a shot?”

This colloquial, off-the-cuff close positions the sale as ‘no-big-deal.’ This makes the decision to buy seem easier. Giving something a shot implies that the decision can be rescinded and that it is not permanent. Psychologically, the client feels there is a ‘way out’ if necessary. It’s a bit of a mind game and that’s what makes this such an excellent close.

2. *“Any Reason Why We Can’t Proceed” Close*

This close works exactly the way it looks. Again, presuming you’ve done your needs analysis and presented a solution, your closing remark is this,

“So, Carrie-Anne, is there any reason why we can’t proceed with the software installation?”

It does two things. First, it solicits any objection that might be lurking in the background. Get rid of the objection and you get the sale. Secondly, it moves the client into the ‘closing mode.’ If you’ve presented well, this question is almost rhetorical because it implies that saying ‘yes’ is the only logical choice. Simply pause and let them reply.

Summary

Great closers always, always ask for the sale because it increases the closing rate. Period. What close you use is a matter of personal style. If you're more casual, use the nouveau approach. If you're a little more subtle, use the assumptive or choice. If you like to go for the brass ring, use the direct close. But use ONE of them.

5 *Habit #5: Closers Invoke A Vow of Silence*

Top tele-sales closers always invoke a 'vow of silence' after they ask for the sale.

Highly effective telephone sales reps ask for the sale using a traditional or a nouveau close and then they 'zip it.' Nothing passes their lips until the prospect speaks. They let the silent pause go to work for them.

Silence is particularly powerful and effective in telephone selling compared to face to face selling. Because there are no visual distraction in tele-sales, silence is perceived as three to six times longer than it really is. What this does is create a noticeable gap – a vacuum in the conversation and, in turn, this creates a degree of tension. It literally compels the prospect to fill the silent void. Silence is an itch that needs to be scratched.

Beware! 2-Way Tension

But tension works both ways.

Telephone reps can acutely feel the awkwardness of silence just as easily as the prospect. Maybe even more so because there's a sale at risk! There can be an overwhelming

impulse to fill that gap with a rush of additional information on the product or service. Or even worse, some reps go to the extreme and torpedo the effort with comments like, "Well...ah...maybe you'd like some more time to think about it," or "Why don't I send you some information and you decide then." Yikes!

Summary

Effective closers resist the urge because they know with absolute certainty that additional conversation of any sort detracts from the objective of closing. Instead they invoke a vow of silence. They doodle or file their nails or clear their desk. And they wait it out.

Give your client the time to digest your offer. Give them the time to weigh their options. Give them time to say yes.

6 *Habit #6: The Best Closers ALWAYS Say 'Thank You'*

Here's a secret tip that highly effective tele-sales reps use to their advantage after the prospect has said 'yes' to the sale.

Great closers say "thank you."

That's it. That's all.

Doesn't seem like much, does it? Seem like common sense, right?

But when was the last time YOU said thank you when you got the order? The fact of the matter is that most sales reps don't say thank you. It is not that they aren't grateful for the sale; it's just

that they forget. This might have been the fifth, sixth or seventh sale of the day. The thank you gets lost in the 'busy-ness' of the transaction or the day.

Others don't say thank you because they don't feel it is necessary; that the buyer has made this decision many times before with the sales rep and dozen like him/her. In other words, it's not all that important; part of the routine; no big deal.

But it is.

Why 'Thank You' is So Important

The best closers know that from a psychological point of view that the close is often the most critical phase of sale. They know that at some level – subconscious or otherwise- the buyer feels that he or she has 'bestowed' a sale on the rep. In an odd way, is not unlike a 'gift.' The buyer had a CHOICE. The choice was you and not someone else.

It doesn't matter that this is business. It doesn't matter that you had the best price, the best product or the best service. At a gut level, the buyer is looking for something reciprocal; something that acknowledges the sale; something that balances the scale of the relationship. It's human nature.

A polite, sincere and quiet thank you is typically all it takes to even the scale.

Delivered well, it says to that buyer "I know you had a choice and I appreciate that you chose me." It says, "I don't take you or the sale for granted." It says, "I'm not complacent and I remember that YOU'RE the customer."

Here's another thing that highly effective closers know. They know that the thank you is

important for this sale, but they also know that it is extremely important for the next sale and the sale after that and the sale after that. And so it goes.

The Card

Here is one other thing that top closers do to make the NEXT sale easier to close.

Depending on the nature of the sale, a great closer will send a hand-written thank you card. If the sale is the first with that account, a handwritten note and card is sent with a real stamp attached. This small gesture shows the new client that you 'took the time.' This is a form of reciprocity. It is recognized and remembered. If the sale is a large one from an existing client, savvy closers will send a card that acknowledges the moment. They don't whip off an e-mail. E-mails are fast and impersonal and easily forgotten. There is little value in an e-mail thank you. Don't bother.

The Gift

Great closers will occasionally reward clients who have made multiple buys. Sending a big package of Hersey Kisses or some other candy with a little note that says, "Thank you for all the business" is small and inexpensive but can pay huge dividends in future sales. A pizza lunch, a bottle of BBQ spices, a coffee mug... any little gesture... can have a powerful effect on the relationship and on future closes.

Summary

Say thank you after each and every sale, big or small. Don't overdo it. Don't gush. Don't act like an excited school kid. Be discrete, be sincere, and be professional.

send you the tracking number by e-mail the moment the delivery is processed.”



Habit #7: Highly Effective Closers Wrap Up Every Call

The final habit that great closers employ to their advantage is the ‘wrap up.’

The ‘wrap up’ occurs after the “Thank you” (Habit #6). It is there that the nitty -gritty details are discussed and the sale is completed. It is not a particularly glamorous part of closing but it is vitally important because little things, if ignored, can throw a wrench into the works. Good closers proactively take steps to avoid any nasty surprises that could cancel the deal or impact customer satisfaction down the line.

At this stage of the sale everyone is happy. You are happy because you closed the deal and the client is happy that the decision has been made. This is the perfect moment to quickly wrap up, handle the details and finish the call. There are four things that should occur:

Step #1: Explain what happens next

Here is where you outline what will occur next relative to getting the sale completed. Be thorough. For example,

“Okay Tracie, I’ll process that order now and it’ll be shipped out _____ (tonight, tomorrow, whenever...) by UPS Ground and you’ll get it by _____ at the latest. I’ll

It’s nothing elaborate and special, is it? But it covers all the bases. Your ‘next steps’ might be a little more complex. Whatever. Be sure to detail it. And another thing: even if you have processed similar sales to this one with the same client, continue to provide the details. (NOTE: ideally, you should go over the order/sale details; line by line. Not all clients want this and will tell you. And of course, some orders might include multiple lines of product which makes the task rather onerous. But where possible, review the details of the sale. It shows you listened and understood. It shows that you are a detailed individual.)

If you’re out of stock, if the client has missed the shipping deadline for today, if there’s ANYTHING that will impact the processing of the sale, NOW is the time to reveal it. Goodwill is stronger at this point than any other time. Consequently, the client is more forgiving and accepting. In short, practice full disclosure.

Step #2: Get Payment

Like duh! Don’t forget this step. After you’ve given the client the ‘what’s next’ summary, conclude by giving the client the total price of the product or service. You can include taxes if you want or you can say “plus taxes.”

Some people argue that there is a risk at this stage; that the client might shy away from the sale if they hear the total price; sticker shock or whatever. I disagree. Better to ‘surprise’ the client now than when they get the invoice. If they are surprised ‘after the fact’ they tend to get resentful. Some will think you hoodwinked them. Don’t risk it. Again, practice full disclosure.

Then say,

“All we need now is to wrap up the payment. How would you like to proceed?”

“The only thing left to do Mark is tackle the payment. How will you be handling this?”

“Eva, to get us started I’ll simply need a deposit of 30% on the total price. That comes to \$700. How would you like to handle that?”

“Jenna, the way our billing works is this ...”

Step #3: Add on Sell (if applicable)

The real difference between a good closer and a GREAT closer is the ability to leverage the moment further and increase the value of a sale through a cross sell or an up sell.

Mediocre closers are so glad they got a sale that they say no more. What they don’t realize is that the client is in a positive frame of mind. Receptive. The major decision of buying is already completed. In effect, the wallet is open. Great closers know that it is easier for a client to say yes to an item that complements the original purchase or that provides greater value. Of course, not all products or services lend themselves to an Add On. Smart closers know this and utilize this step only when appropriate.

The tricks to a good add on is to make the suggestion sound casual and easy. This eliminates any sense of pressure or hype. You do this by using trigger phrases like this,

“Oh, Steve, before we wrap up, did you know you get a price break of 15% if you order 5 or more? You’re only two items away... would you like me to add those on?”

“Maria, I see that your order comes to \$465.85. Did you know you can get free shipping with orders of \$500 or more? Is there anything else you might like to add?”

“Gordon, before I enter this, do you need any sleeves or socks for those devices ...just so you’re not caught short?”

“By the way Chantal, how does your stock look for test strips? You haven’t order in a while and it might save you some time and hassle to order now.”

Notice that these offers are consultative in nature and benefit oriented. Good closers know that clients don’t see the effort as ‘salesy’ but rather as value added. So they don’t hesitate to ask. The worst a client can say is no but good closers are well aware that about 25% of buyers say yes. Good odds.

Step #4: Say “Anything else?” and Good-Bye

Effective telephone closers ask one more question: “Anything else?” The vast majority of the time, there is nothing else. But they ask because it is a quick way to conclude the call and not draw out the conversation. There’s nothing worse than strained, awkwardly polite chit-chat where overly grateful sales rep sputters niceties. Meanwhile the client is anxious to get of the line.

Look, if there’s nothing else, simply say, “Great, look forward to speaking to you again. Good bye.”

Summary

The final habit is a tidy habit. It cleanly completes the sale. It nips any potential problems in the bud. It paves the way for future sales.

Conclusion

So there you have it. The 7 closing habits might seem long and tedious...maybe even unnecessary. Perhaps that true. On the other hand, it is probably why greater closers sell so much more than the average rep. Practice the 7 habits and sell more!



Jim Domanski is president of Teleconcepts Consulting and for over 20 years has been helping companies and individuals use the telephone more effectively and successfully to sell and market their

products. For more information on services, training coaching, articles, newsletters, blogs and other Special Reports, visit www.telesalesmaster.com or call 613 591 1998.