

UPGRADE OUR TERMS, UPGRADE OUR IMAGE

PROFESSIONAL SPEAKER BRIAN TRACY has an expression that is timeless. It is “everything counts.” And in the world of professional selling, everything does count, including our use of terms and language.

How many of us in the past have heard ourselves say “Here’s my sales pitch” or “Mr. Customer, is it time to make a deal?” or “Is it time to sign the contract?”

Whenever we hear the word “pitch”, what comes to mind? Are we pitching horseshoes or making a sales presentation? If it’s selling, doesn’t it make more sense to call it what it is—namely—a presentation? Even better, if the situation presents itself, we can substitute the words “sales dialogue” or “sales conversation”. Don’t these substitutions sound a whole lot more appealing than the over-used word “pitch”?

What if we say “deal”, what’s the first thing that comes to mind? Are we playing cards? Or are we trial closing? In my mind when we hear that word, we are entering a phase in the sales dialogue that invites a long and painful experience called negotiation. Why? Using the word “deal” conjures up all kinds of images that suggest we are setting ourselves up for a bargaining session on pricing and terms. And this does not even need to happen. As Pogo states, “We have met the enemy, and they are us.” We can be our own worst enemy.

Doesn’t it make sense then to eliminate the word “deal” from our vocabulary? By doing so, we will probably delay or totally avoid a negotiation session. And these are never fun because we need to be very well-schooled in the entire science and art of negotiation. Think about it. Just for starters, a good negotiation assumes both parties have stated their position as an initiation point to the bargaining process. Unless we already know what the ranked priority of decision criteria are to the customer, we end up groping around, trying to make the situation fit. There is always that fuzziness in our tummy after leaving one of these situations, because we wonder if we gave away something that we did not need to. What’s worse, due to the lack of facts, we were not able to distinguish our value proposition in the buyer’s mind.

Rather than the word “deal”, hereafter, let’s substitute the words “business transaction”.

Contracts and Conundrums: What’s the reaction of our customer when he/she hears the word “contract”? Having observed it over and over again in “customerland”, I can validate we invite our customer to engage in a séance with “legalman”. This courts disaster since “legalman’s” purpose in life is to protect his client and to find problems in contracts. He needs to justify his fee by rewording



the structure and content of the contract to be advantageous to the client. Now we are really in a pickle. The sales process slows down, the forecast is no longer accurate and our nerves get tested. Don’t overlook that the “clean” sale about which we told the sales manager will have some modifications that none of us expected. Then our executive management gets involved since they will be called upon to approve the custom arrangement. How’s this image working so far? It can get really ugly when attention is brought on our sales opportunity. All sorts of questions get asked about our ability to sell, negotiate and close. We inflict this on ourselves.

Let’s substitute some better language. Try using the word “agreement” next time.

Add it all up. We will begin seeing the dramatic effect this has on our customers and prospects because they see us differently—in a more professional way. We just put another club in our bag of unique value propositions.

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