

# WHO NOT TO DO BUSINESS WITH

## A Guide to Saving Your Time, Money and Sanity

by John R. Graham, Graham Communications

Getting more customers, pushing sales up, and growing accounts are the goals of every business. The effort to make the sale often blinds both management and sales representatives to those who never will become customers.

Wasting time and money on trying to get business from those who have no intention of buying is all too common. "I really thought I could get that one," comments one salesperson, while another remarks, "I should have known that the company wasn't going to do anything."

Many salespeople want to believe they can turn even the most difficult prospects into paying customers. The desire is noble, of course, but not everyone can become a customer. There are people who, for very specific reasons, will never say yes.

Knowing how to identify the "no sale" types is important. Once spotted, it is time to walk away before they drain you of your dignity and ideas.

Here are 12 profiles of people who you do not want to waste time trying to do business with:

### 1. Those who are control freaks.

You are asked for your suggestions. Because you take the assignment seriously, you present your ideas and make your recommendations. You have created the perfect environment for the control freak who systematically and thoroughly dissects and dismisses each of your ideas.

You will feel ignorant and stripped of professionalism. The control freak dismisses everything you say as dead wrong! You don't give up and try another tack.

Wrong again! Even if you make one sale, that is all you will get because the control freak devours salespeople like peanuts.

There is no way to win.

### 2. Those who love to spend time schmoozing.

Schmoozers are not buyers. This needs to be understood because it is easy to come away from a meeting with a typical schmoozer feeling on top of the world. "We really hit it off well," is a common remark heard after such a session.

The schmoozer sets you up and then knocks you down. With schmoozers, there is always a combination of hope and impediment. "I really want to do this, but..." says the schmoozer.

No matter what you do there is always something in the way of putting the deal together. Why? A schmoozer wants to schmooze, not buy.

### 3. Those who pick your brain.

With so many companies downsizing, information has become even more valuable. It's free outsourcing because the goal is to get your information, not to buy from you.

There will never be a sale in most cases. Get away from those who tell you that they are in the "information gathering stage." They are and it is the only stage they will ever be in.

### 4. Those who tempt you with a prize.

If salespeople remember that lures are for fish, not people, they will stay out of trouble. "If you can just do this, there's going to be lots of business for you down the road. Just go easy on us at first and I'll make it up to you."

The message is different from the words. This customer wants to steal what you are selling. The lure of future business is simple to drive the price down on what the buyer wants now. There is no future with customers who attempt to dazzle you with "pot of gold" type prospects. While you are thinking ahead, they have their hand in your pocket.

### 5. Those who say, "We don't have a budget. Just tell me what it's going to cost."

The rule here is very simple: Never do business with anyone who does not have a budget! "How much do you plan to spend on this project?" you ask. "We don't have a figure." Or, the person may be doing comparative shopping. It is also possible that the venture is just a whim. Whim or not, it is no win for the salesperson.

### 6. Those who tell you how much business you'll get as they grow.

This is a classic strategy. Although small accounts can and do become large and profitable, there is no sound reason for giving away your services. Yet, this is exactly what is happening when you give up front in order to get more later.

In the eyes of the customer, you have established yourself as a sucker! As soon as you can no longer deliver the product or service at below cost, you will be replaced.

### 7. Those who talk about partnering.

One of the most certain signs that you will be in trouble with a customer occurs when the conversation turns to partnering. Run for your life if anyone says, "We're looking for a strategic partner."

Why? The definition of a strategic partner is one who has been locked in for an extended period of time to unprofitable conditions. Partnering works well as long as you give.

### 8. Those who are unusually eager to get your proposal.

Being at the right place at the right moment is what every salesperson dreams about. And it can happen, as we all know.

But, more often than not, the urgent request is simply a technique for beating up on the customer's present supplier. If the prospective customer fails to express interest in you or your company, chances are that you are being used. These are the times to walk away.

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**9. Those who lead you to believe that they are the decision makers.**

Every successful salesperson gets to one question quickly: "Are you the decision maker?" Many customers have learned to give the right answer. They say yes even when they have no buying authority if they want to hold the salesperson's interest. Only much later does the decision-making process unfold, usually hint-by-hint.

The best way to find out where you stand is by asking up-front, for example: "Every company has its own decision-making process, its own procedures. I want to be properly prepared so please explain to me how it works in your company."

Instead of putting the person on the defensive ("Do you make decisions?"), you are communicating that you want the individual to be your ally, your mentor through the process.

**10. Those who fail to say, "We're going to buy."**

There are only a few magic words in sales. Four of them are "We're going to buy." Unless you hear these words from the customer, you will never make the sale!

When the customer says, "We're going to buy," you should be listening very carefully and take the message seriously because customers who say they are going to buy do exactly that when they are ready. If you are not there when the customer gets ready, someone else will get the business.

**11. Those who say, "The cost isn't important. We want quality."**

After you have prepared a proper quotation or proposal based on the customer's specifications, you discover one of the great truths of sales: The customer has no interest in quality and is only concerned with a rock bottom price!

This happens every day. You take the customer seriously, believing that what you are told is the truth. Only later, when you have lost the sale, do you realize that the prospect talked one way and acted another. Taking time to probe beyond the words may help identify this type of customer and save you precious time and effort.

**12. Those who demand that you prove yourself.**

One of the most effective techniques for catching a salesperson off-guard is for a customer to question a company's expertise and ability to deliver the product or service. After you have tried to defend your company's honor, you discover that the purpose of challenging capabilities is to drive a better bargain, to get you to do more for less.

Do not fall for the trick. Go on the offensive. Make it clear that you must be sure that the customer is capable of taking proper advantage of your product or service. You need assurance that your prospect will follow through as you recommend because your company's reputation is at stake!

If your company has a sound track record, then there is no reason for you to be put on the defensive. Place the burden of proof on



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the customer's shoulders. If the prospect is unwilling to treat your company as an equal, look for business elsewhere.

Being aware of these 12 customer types can keep you from wasting your time and effort with nonproductive prospects. Let someone else learn the hard way because you have learned how to identify quality customers, who are looking for vendors to respect, not ridicule.

Is it possible to win over any of these customers? The only way is to make it clear how you play the game. They must do business your way on the crucial issues. If the customer is not willing to step forward, it is time for you to walk away.

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