

# How Top Printing Salespeople Resolve Customer Objections



by JOE RICKARD

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Recently, we asked a group of small printing company owners and managers to describe some of the toughest customer objections they have faced. Responses were varied and ranged from the standard, general objections to very specific product and technology objections. Perhaps, the most interesting finding was that regardless of the size, type or location of the printing company, many objections were the same. They included:

- “Your price is too high”;
- “We are happy with our current print supplier”;
- “We want to look at other suppliers”;
- “You need to be approved by our purchasing department”;
- “We are concerned about the security of our documents being sent through the Web”;
- “We are concerned you do not have the capability to handle Web-based printing solutions”;
- “We don’t want our print provider to ‘job out’ any press work”;
- “Moving our print files to another company will require too much time and effort”;
- “We have already looked at variable-data printing and found it is too expensive.”

## Three great techniques to manage objections

There are a variety of sales techniques that top salespeople use to answer customer objections. Though these techniques alone will not solve customer objections, with practice, they will provide salespeople with the confidence and framework to organize their responses with strong and targeted answers. Here are three of our favorites.

### 1. Feel, felt, found

Many customers do not like their objections to be challenged. For instance, if

customers say that they are happy with their current printing companies, potential responses can be structured around: “I understand how you feel. Many of our customers have felt the same way until they started using our online ordering system and experienced faster turnaround on their printing orders.”

### 2. Turn objections into questions

Restating the objection as if it were a question is an effective technique to use in response to customer objections to price or new services. For example, when a top salesperson encounters a price objection, he or she might respond with, “That’s a good point. I understand why you would want to make sure our prices are competitive. Would you be interested in Commercial Trust Co.’s reaction to our price structure?”

Using this technique, a sales rep also could resolve an objection to a new service, such as variable-data printing. An example of a good response to this type of customer objection is: “I can understand your questioning the effectiveness of variable-data printing. Would you be interested in recent studies from The Direct Mail Institute?”

### 3. Ensure the objection is “real” then sell superior benefits

Top sales reps respond to hard objections by probing with questions to ensure an understanding of the root issue or concern. It is common for customers to disguise objections as a stalling tactic. For example, a price objection can be expressed by a customer as a reason or excuse not to make a decision.

Once top sales performers understand and isolate the cause of a customer objection, they can minimize and offset it by stating the superior benefits of the

proposed printing solution.

Says John Paul Teti, Solutions Development representative of Triangle in Princeton, NJ, “Anticipating customer confusion and sitting down with customers to work through the costs and benefits of proposed printing solutions is critical to resolving customer concerns and questions. These steps are invaluable to either eliminate or minimize customer objections.”

For instance, when a top sales rep faces a price objection for direct mail pieces, he or she first ensures that price is the real objection. Once it is established that the customer’s objection truly is the price, the salesperson can explain that direct mail enjoys high-response rates resulting in superior ROIs.

### **Do customer objections always reveal new sales opportunities?**

Many experienced salespeople tell us it is good to receive customer objections. They argue each objection brings an opportunity. We disagree.

Because of current market conditions, decision makers have little time to investigate new ideas and solutions. It is important to minimize customer objections by doing a thorough job of understanding the customer’s business and requirements. If the salesperson has researched the account well, most objections will be anticipated and covered before the customer brings them to the table.

### **Ten “best practices” to successfully handle customer objections**

In addition to the three techniques top salespeople shared with us, Intellective Solutions has compiled 10 more key strategies to use when responding to customer objections.

#### **1. Be prepared**

Research customers’ businesses

and markets thoroughly.

#### **2. Anticipate customers’ objections**

Eliminate most common objections through well-prepared presentations and talk tracks. For instance, almost every printing salesperson at some point will hear that his or her shop’s prices are too high.

#### **3. Practice**

Practice answering objections at home, in the car and at the office. While it is important to rehearse your responses, take extra care to make your responses sound spontaneous and natural instead of canned.

#### **4. Limit the use of manipulative and pressure sales tactics**

Today’s customers have instant access to information on the Web, therefore, they can be more sophisticated about pressure tactics. A direct and tactful approach based on factual data will work better in developing long-term relationships.

#### **5. Use third-party endorsements, testimonials, white papers**

When possible, use customer or industry supporting arguments to overcome objections. Research indicates that referring to other customers’ positive experiences has the greatest impact on sales.

#### **6. Listen carefully**

Remember this Italian Proverb: “To a quick question, give a slow answer.” Although it can be challenging, hearing out the objection is very important.

#### **7. Respond to easy objections respectfully and courteously**

There are objections that a salesperson can answer directly and offer proof. An example is, “We do not want to inventory our printed brochures.” This can be easily resolved if the print shop provides ful-

fillment or print-on-demand services.

#### **8. Use silence whenever possible**

After a client expresses an objection, keep quiet. Many times the customer will answer his or her own objection. Remember, “To a quick question, give a slow answer.”

#### **9. Acknowledge each objection**

Hearing out objections and allowing clients the opportunity to “talk out the objection” does not relieve a salesperson of the need to handle and acknowledge each and every unresolved objection. If objections are not met aggressively, they will resurface later in the sales process. The customer will hear much less of a salesperson’s presentation while he or she ponders the lack of response.

#### **10. Stay calm**

It is perfectly acceptable to say, “I do not know. I will get back to you with an answer.” Making up an answer will be a knockout blow to the sale.

Virtually every printing company owner or manager we talk to tells us that handling objections is a top skill required of their salespeople. Identifying most common objections and practicing appropriate responses are great ways to build the sales skills required to become a top printing salesperson. Remember the words of President John Quincy Adams, “Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.” ●

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*Joe Rickard is a sales training leader and consultant who works with printing and technology companies to improve their sales effectiveness. He is the founder of Intellective Solutions, a provider of customized sales and sales management training material and services. Contact Rickard at 845-753-6156, jrickard@intellectives.com or visit [www.Intellectives.com](http://www.Intellectives.com)*