

## Chapter 1

# Falling in Love with Closing

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Defining closing
- ▶ Overcoming closing discomfort
- ▶ Mastering the art of closing
- ▶ Making closing fun

**I** love selling! If you love it, too, you're nodding your head in agreement to that statement, and you're well on your way to becoming a great success in the sales industry. One of the first things you have to do in this business is to fall in love with selling; selling is not something you can be somewhat so-so about.

When you love sales, you automatically think about it all the time. Selling is more like a hobby than a job or even a career. To illustrate my point, suppose gardening is your hobby. You simply love to garden. You have a garden. You have books about gardening. You think about gardening when you come home. You work on your garden every spare moment you have. In other words, gardening gives you great pleasure. Because you love gardening so much, you study it. You read about plants, their cycles, proper nourishment, and even lighting requirements. Before too long, you know almost everything there is to know about gardening. In fact, you're building quite a reputation in the neighborhood for being an expert gardener. Now think of sales in terms of a hobby. When you love sales, your hobby — what you truly enjoy doing — is your livelihood. And who wouldn't want that?

To become a top producer in the sales field, you have to devote time and attention to selling — like you do with a hobby. Just as a gardener watches and studies his plants, you have to study your customers.

- ✔ Examine their emotions.

Become aware of any fears they have regarding decision-making (selling) situations. Refer to Chapter 6 to find out more about fear in selling situations.

- ✔ Observe them in everyday buying and selling situations.

- ✓ Recognize buying signs and behaviors.

People act a certain way when they're interested enough to make a purchase. I cover this in detail in Chapter 2.



You're constantly selling and constantly moving toward a close. Either you're closing your prospective customer on the idea of owning your offering, or they're closing you on the idea of taking your presentation and moving on to somebody who cares (that is, they just flat aren't interested). If you want your selling situations to be more like the first scenario, become an excellent student of human nature.

## Covering Your Bases

Sales closing is the brass ring of selling, the climax, the bottom line. If you covered all your bases to the point of closing the selling situation, the close itself should go as smooth as silk. By covering all your bases, I mean you've properly handled all the following steps, which come before closing in the selling cycle:

- ✓ **Prospecting:** Finding the people to sell.
- ✓ **Original contact:** Making a positive first impression.
- ✓ **Qualification:** Determining if this person has the need and ability to own.
- ✓ **Presentation:** Demonstrating your product effectively.



Each of these steps is covered in my book, *Selling For Dummies* — if you're looking for a great overall selling skills book, this is the one you need. Prospecting is covered in great depth in another of my books, *Sales Prospecting For Dummies* (both by IDG Books Worldwide, Inc.).

## What Is the Selling Process without Closing?

Without closing, the selling process isn't much. After all, why go into sales if you aren't going to practice closing? I hate to say it, but you're wasting your time and that of your prospective customers if you don't close. Presenting without closing is like a story with no ending. Or worse yet, it's a story that you know has a great ending, but the storyteller stops just before the end and refuses to tell the rest. Instead of remembering all the fun of the story, you walk away angry and frustrated.

Without a close, everybody loses. Believe me when I tell you that your prospective customers don't want to have wasted their

time. They want to own, so let them. And obviously, you don't want to have spent hours preparing for the call and not close, right? Your company doesn't want to have invested money and time in your training to have you do everything right until it comes to the close and then walk out. Lastly, your family doesn't want to see you frustrated and suffer the financial losses that come with the inability to close a transaction. So decide to be a winner and let all those involved in the transaction win, too. All you have to do is ask for the business and close the sale.

Closing is the easiest thing to do when you've done everything else right; it's the most difficult thing to do when you've botched the rest of your presentation. Although you do come across a great closer and a weak presenter every now and then, it's more common to see great presenters and weak closers. Just remember, nobody benefits from owning or selling if you can't or won't close.

## *Tom's Definition of Closing*

Figuring out when, where, or how to close a transaction is difficult if you have no true understanding of what closing is all about. Closing means different things to different people.

- ✔ For some, it's simply taking an order or ringing up a sale on the cash register.
- ✔ For others, closing is the culmination of hours spent researching, planning, presenting, questioning, persuading, discovering, and finally helping the prospective buyer to own your offering.

For me, closing has been an evolutionary process of realization that without professional, expert help, many customers would not be fortunate enough to benefit from owning my product or service. Because I believe in my product so completely, it doesn't make sense to hold back the opportunity for others to enjoy the advantages of ownership. Thirty years in this business have taught me, firsthand, how to be a natural, helpful, skilled closer who cares enough to help his prospective clients own.

Closing can be defined in the following ways:

- ✔ A well-filled ink pen in the hands of a sane, mature individual who affixes a signature to a predetermined dotted line with no physical help from the salesperson.

Doesn't this paint an interesting picture? Yes, that pen better be filled with ink. The clients must be competent to make a decision and we, as salespeople, cannot physically move them to approve the paperwork.



- ✔ Professionally using a person's desire to own the benefits of your product and then blending your sincere desire to serve in helping a person make a decision that's truly good for them.

Now I'm talking service. The clients do have a desire to own or they wouldn't invest their valuable time talking with you, right? You must have a sincere desire to help them and serve their needs. And most importantly, the decision to own must be truly good for them.

What kind of a night's sleep would you get tonight if you helped a young couple make a decision to own a home that you knew was beyond their means — even if they wanted it? If you're dedicated to being a professional, you wouldn't sleep well at all. If you're truly a professional, you would help them find another home that they could fall in love with — and afford.



- ✔ A symphony of words and actions that emotionally build, culminating with a win/win final agreement.

This view of selling is the definitive mark for the people that I train today.

The word “symphony” was written within this definition for a reason. Today we listen to classical music composed centuries ago with as much awe and inspiration as when it was first performed. I look at a natural close exactly the same way. I listen to the words that build and culminate into an emotional finish, a symphony of words that tugs at the heartstrings of our customers until they know they just have to enter into the win/win situation of owning my product or service. I win if the customers own my product; they win because they are gaining tremendous benefits that they'll enjoy for years to come. The symphony comes into play when all those minor agreements build emotionally into a melody of culminating win/win notes designed to move everybody involved toward the common goal of closing.

## *What closing is not*

Oftentimes, it's easier to describe and get a clear picture of what something is by knowing what it is not. By the same token, I thought it would be helpful to first of all let you know what closing is *not* before I tell you what it *is*. So, closing is not:

- ✔ **Comfortable (in the beginning)**

Closing will be extremely uncomfortable for you at times, and I won't promise that it gets a whole lot better the tenth

time you attempt to close. However, the more successes you experience, the more eager you will be to accept those “nos” and turn them into “yesses.”

### ✔ **Magical**

I think this is probably the most misunderstood aspect of closing. Some would have you believe that what they do is mystical and magical and that the ability to close is something you either have or you don't have. Not so — don't believe a word of it. Everyone has the ability to be a competent, even talented closer. A certain personality type doesn't close better than another. I've seen a very reserved, almost introverted salesperson be an incredible closer, so that certainly isn't the case. And the good closers aren't always the 20-year veterans who have cornered the market on closing. I've also seen a two-month rookie close with the best of them. Closing involves no magic and there's no mystery to it — just determination to be successful at your craft.

## *What closing is*

Okay. So you know what closing isn't. Here's what it is:

### ✔ **An art**

Although closing isn't magical, there is an art to it. Every word you say is creating an image, either from memory or from experience, be it your approach, interview, presentation, questioning, value building, or closing. You are constructing a picture with your words, and what you are attempting to do is get your customers to catch your vision. How? Well, you appeal to their senses. You build and build and build the vision and excitement until the customers are emotionally peaked to own.

### ✔ **Enhanced by practice**

Boy, is that low-tech or what? Many have the knowledge and skill to close a transaction but don't implement what they know. The bad thing about closing is that it's difficult to practice without doing so on live customers. You have to take a chance and make yourself ask for the business, make yourself close. Don't worry that it isn't the right time, place, or person — just keep closing. The more you close, the more you develop your closing instinct.



## The art of closing

I love art. About 12 years ago when I first started collecting art, I would look at some of the masters like Picasso, Dali, Miro, and I'd say to myself, "Wow, is that ever ugly!" You see, in the beginning I had no appreciation of art. Then I began to study the greats and I realized that the images on canvas came from images and feelings based on knowledge, past experiences, and learned skills of the artists.

Every word you say is just like taking a canvas and starting to paint pictures

in the person's mind. All the right words create the right pictures based on their buying motivation. The wrong words create something that they don't enjoy seeing — fear, which is the greatest enemy in the art of closing. You know what? You're not in the business of selling; you're in the business of people, and moving them to own by painting word pictures is an unbelievably important part of your business.

### ✔ Natural

Closing should be a logical move, a natural progression to the final step of the selling process. You may be saying, "Tom, closing isn't natural for me at all!" Okay, I hear you. Because closing doesn't feel natural now doesn't mean that it'll never feel natural; it means that you need to figure out what you're doing right when closing *does* feel natural — and continue to do more of the same.

### ✔ Fun

Okay, now I may be stretching it a bit for some of you, but I believe successfully closing a sale is very fun. I've met especially challenging prospects before and persuaded them to get happily involved in my product and/or service. When they decided to own, I walked away about ten feet off the ground — it was a kick! Closing is fun. Now, I'll agree that attempting to close and not closing isn't a lot of fun, and that's where the frustration can come in. Keep practicing. I promise you, all the practice and effort will be worth your time when you experience the fun of a great close.

**✔ Always possible**

I'm sure you've heard that there are some people who just can't be closed. Not true! We all want to own; we just don't want to buy. If you have successfully set up an appointment with clients, they want to own what you're offering. They can be closed. Maybe not on the first visit, and maybe not by you, but they can be closed when the time is right. Even though there are temporary conditions to a sale that may prevent the customer from owning now, it's your job to try to remove those obstacles and close the sale. If you never try to close, I can guarantee you that you'll be the warm-up act for the next salesperson who isn't afraid to ask for the business.

## *Do You Have to Go through All the Closing Steps?*

Sometimes you do — sometimes you don't! Whether you have to go through every closing step depends on the customers and your ability to create an emotional experience. If you've done a great job and you're halfway through your presentation when



### **Bulldog determination**

I'm not ashamed to admit it. The first few years I was in the business, many salespeople who were lucky enough to get my prospects after I thought they couldn't be closed were thanking me all the way to the bank. I remember being so frustrated when I saw this happen. The difference between me and many other salespeople who got out of the business is that I was determined to learn every element of sales and master them one by one. I was devoted to success and determined to close.

Determination is what it takes to be a successful closer — that "bulldog"

determination that you're going to learn to close and get comfortable with the process no matter what. Until you do become a strong closer, you're really nothing but an interesting conversationalist. Don't get me wrong; when I say *strong closer* I don't mean that you must be that obnoxious, rowdy stereotypical salesperson. I mean that you have to stay focused on your objective, and your objective should always be to close. Whether you're closing for the appointment, closing on building rapport and a relationship, or closing on the sale, stay focused and keep closing.

your prospects begin giving you buying signs (see Chapter 2), attempt to close them right then and there. In this case, if you stick to going through all the steps, you may cause them to cool down and change their minds. The danger of skipping some of the steps is when you take shortcuts that prevent your prospects from seeing the fuller picture of your offering.

The more you close, the more you realize that each situation is different, which is what makes selling and closing so much fun. Every day presents a new challenge. Every transaction enables the salesperson to practice different skills and closing strategies. Every success paves the way for more successes. Closing becomes more powerful, more effective, and more efficient the more you successfully close.

## Why Is Closing a Dirty Word to Some People?

We are constantly playing off old experiences that may have taught us to fear, to inaccurately judge or to mistakenly act. Some of our experiences are so strong that the images they have created in our minds are almost impossible to erase. Notice I said *almost* impossible. For some of us, it takes a lot more work to become strong closers because we have to erase the concept that “closing” is a dirty word.



For me, I had to get over thinking of closing as a bad word. My parents taught me never to ask others for things. Asking for something wasn't polite; consequently, asking for business was very difficult for me to do. I'd go out and give a powerful presentation; I'd spend hours building rapport, establishing trust and confidence in my ability to do the job; then I'd leave without asking the prospects to own. In fact, I didn't even realize that I wasn't asking for the sale.



So, right now, I'd like to give all of you who were raised like me permission to ask others for the business. Here's how I would suggest you get over this hesitation to ask: Reinforce the idea that you are not really *asking* for something from others; you are *offering* something to them. Now, wouldn't your parents be upset with you if you had company in your home and didn't offer them refreshments? Okay, think of closing as the same thing. If you take up a prospect's time and fail to offer him anything in return, you're not being fair to him, are you? Does this help you change your attitude about asking? Thinking of closing in terms of offering sure helped me!

Closing is also considered a dirty word because of the feelings it can sometimes conjure up in both the salesperson and his or her prospective customer. If you've attempted to close and you haven't done a great job of things, you've probably helped to create a fearful or uncomfortable situation. Perhaps you've been pushy or came across looking too eager or anxious, and your customers lost trust in you. Or maybe you did a fairly good job but tried to close too soon, and the customers felt rushed and a bit panicky. Mistakes like this show you where you need to work a little harder. You may even lose the sale. But at least you tried to close.



Although you hate to have an unsuccessful close, you have to understand that you're going to experience failure right along with your successes. I'd like you to keep in mind, though, that the real failure is not asking for the business and never asking those closing questions. The failure is when you don't try.

I'm always amazed when I hear salespeople talk about their fears of appearing too pushy or overbearing. I'd say that today's salesperson is just the opposite. Today's salespeople will "relationship" you to death. They spend hours planning and presenting and then leave the customers high and dry wondering how to own the product. We've come to the opposite end of the pendulum, and it's time we find balance in selling. Not too pushy — not too laid back. Build a relationship, but build a successful close in the process.

## *Adopt a Positive Closing Attitude*

Professional salespeople don't step into a selling situation and dread the moment of closing. In fact, they purposefully move toward the close, excited about helping their customers to own. Can you see the difference in attitude between the top producers and those who struggle through each sale? Having a positive attitude toward closing is the key. Also, professionals aren't focused on their gains but instead concentrate on what they can offer the customer — which is why top professionals look forward to a successful close. They know that successfully closing the customer is the only way they'll be able to help the customers find solutions to their problems, discover the riches of owning the product or service, and benefit from the entire process. Because most customers aren't going to ask you to close them, you have to take the initiative. To put yourself in a positive frame of mind, think of closing the sale like this:

- ✔ Wouldn't you say that your customers deserve to own your product?
- ✔ Wouldn't you agree that most of them deserve to be served by an honest, hardworking salesperson such as yourself?
- ✔ Aren't you slighting your customer — depriving them of the opportunity to own your product — by not providing them that opportunity?

I can honestly tell you that when you go into a selling situation with this attitude about closing, you're going to be better prepared to ask for the business and close the transaction. As you change your attitude, your customers will do the same — and everybody wins.

Every closing has one thing in common — success! Create success in your future selling situations by becoming a competent closer. Look at closing as a means to a happy end, not an end to a selling situation. Think of closing as an opening: Opening the doors to a future in sales that promises you and your customers endless opportunity.