

Objections Are a Great Thing!

September 01, 2005



"Customers do not buy how good you are at what you do. They buy how good you are at who you are."
— Harry Beckwith, *Selling The Invisible*

Objections are inevitable in any selling situation. An F&I professional must be capable of capitalizing on customer objections. The ability to welcome multiple objections and respond positively no matter how many objections the customer raises is the sign of an experienced professional.

Rarely do customers walk into the finance office asking to buy F&I products. Instead, they typically object numerous times in a variety of ways by expressing concerns or offering reasons why they don't want or need our products. Most objections are not simply, "no." They're just an indication that customers do not yet perceive they want or need the

product being discussed, or they do not yet feel that the value exceeds the cost.

Often, an objection is simply a request for more information. When customers give you an objection or concern, what they are really asking you to do is provide specific information that is of interest to them, or that relates to their particular situations. Objections are a great thing because customers are providing you with detailed directions on how far you have to go and what exit you need to take on the road to a sale.

Overcoming an objection doesn't mean winning the argument or proving to customers that they are wrong. Overcoming an objection requires finding customers' needs and helping them see how your products will provide them with a better, safer or more secure future. Most objections are the result of customers' own experiences, personalities or backgrounds.

Whether you are able to overcome an objection is determined primarily by your ability to provide the customer with valid reasons why they need the product being discussed. If you run out of reasons why they need the product before the customer runs out of objections, you are not going to make the sale.

Welcome Every Objection

The first key to overcoming any objection is to welcome every objection. This is where many product sales are made or lost in the F&I office. Most successful F&I managers are confident in their abilities and very competitive. Unfortunately, it's often after getting an objection that their egos and competitive natures become negatives rather than positives. The moment they get an objection, the natural urge is to "win," so they shift into combat mode or become argumentative in an effort to prove the customer's objections aren't valid.

When a customer objects to a service contract by saying, "That's why I'm buying a Honda, because they don't break down," a smart aleck response like, "Have you looked in our service department? It's not full of Toyotas!" is not going to sell anybody a vehicle service agreement. F&I professionals know it's critical to never resent, ignore or trivialize a customer objection. Whether it's the first or the fifteenth, every objection offers insight into customers' wants, needs and concerns.

Keep in mind, you also communicate through your body language and tone of voice. Often an F&I manager will become frustrated or angry when a customer voices multiple objections to one or more products, and they allow the customer to see their frustration. Suddenly, their friendly, helpful demeanor changes to "if you're not going to buy anything, then get the heck out of my office."

Listen Carefully And Completely

The next key to overcoming an objection is to stop assuming that you understand it just because you've heard

the same objection a hundred times before. Listening requires that you first shut up, so customers can voice their objections, and you can concentrate on what they are really saying. It also means listening intently and focusing on their concerns, so customers know you fully understand their unique situation. By letting the customer talk, you reduce sales resistance and can gather the information you need to sell your products.

While you may have heard the exact same objection from the last 10 customers, it is still the first time this customer has ever expressed his concern or voiced this objection to you. When you listen to the customer, you also develop trust and rapport because the customer realizes you're not trying to sell them, you're trying to help them make a good decision. {+PAGEBREAK+} **Qualify The Objection**

The first objection is rarely if ever the real objection. It's the automatic, pre-programmed response customers use when they are not yet ready to buy. For example, when a store sales clerk approaches you and asks, "Can I help you?" the automatic reply we all use is "No thanks, I'm just looking." That's not an objection, it's an automatic response, just like "I don't need that. I have plenty of insurance."

Often, the initial objection is stated in general terms, and it's important to isolate the customer's real objection. "It's too expensive," "I can't afford it" or "I don't need it" are too general, and they require getting beneath the surface to reveal the real objection.

The use of reflective probes such as "So you feel like it's more than you can afford?" or "You're not sure you need the protection?" is an excellent way to draw out more details and uncover the real objection. Playing back or echoing customers' objections by using a few key words lets them know you heard their objection and encourages them to provide additional information and elaborate on their initial response.

As an added benefit, while customers are expounding on their objection, you have more time to decide what course to take to overcome it. Once you have identified and qualified an objection, always attempt to isolate it by getting the customer to agree that it's the only thing standing in the way of their purchasing the product. An objection that stands alone is diminished simply because it is alone.

Demonstrate Empathy to Concerns

Customers have to know that you truly understand their concerns. This requires more than saying, "I know what you mean" or "I understand" You have to rephrase the customers' objection to let them know you really do understand, and then demonstrate that you know how they feel. "I can certainly appreciate your concern, especially since your last payment was only \$400. I wouldn't want a payment I wasn't sure I could afford either."

Before you can overcome any objection, you must first come around to the customer's side of the desk (not literally, but figuratively). Put yourself in your customers' shoes. Demonstrate that you are seeing their concern from their perspective. When customers know that you understand their situation and can relate to how they feel, they are much more willing to listen to your recommendation.

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