

## Fifteen Sad, Sad Selling Mistakes

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With an emphasis on compliance, product and technical knowledge the capability to sell has sadly been neglected. Jim Prigg CEO of KnowledgeMaster International looks at the pitfalls and mistakes salespeople can make when offering their solutions to buyers.

**Which of these could you eliminate?**

**Which of these can you improve on?**

**Which of these need to be addressed?**

**1. Sending information by email without a strategic action or activity for the prospect and then not following up personally.** All messages should be specific, personalized, and focused on a strategic advantage of importance to the buyer. A simple connective expression like, *"Mr. Prospect I would really appreciate your counsel on (insert benefit)"* is an invitation to enter into dialogue.

**2. Being arrogant.** Push to far, too fast or too often and you will get buyer resistance. Understand that while urgency to move forward is important for you and the buyer, put it in a way where there is a real advantage or benefit for the buyer to answer or react.

**3. Being meek.** Just leaving information with a buyer and then expecting them to action it, is naïve, weak and meek. Include ways, advantages and benefits for the buyer to respond, ask questions or seek more information. Try this interactive question, *"Mr. Prospect, what parts of the presentation do you a) need more information on b) feel good about?" c) Want to delete?"*

**4. Not seeing yourself as a change agent.** Salespeople are change agents. You convince people to take actions on your offers and advice despite their reluctance, fear, procrastination, ignorance and arrogance. You need to know how to take people out of their comfort zones and to get them to embrace reality. Two effective ways of doing this are by visual impact and case studies. Simply ask, *"Does this case study have some similar considerations to your situation?" "What would you change to accommodate your outcomes?"*

**5. Not knowing how to pre-empt objections.** Discover how to diminish the chance of objections arising by including them in your presentation. Include the timeless statement, *"You are probably curious to know why/how (insert potential sticking point) can be explained"*. Or include the magical statement, *"Just imagine if this*

I want to think it over

*solution were implemented now, what would be the advantages/benefits for you or your company?"*

**6. Not knowing how to handle objections to your particular offer(s).** There will be objections that rise regularly whenever you present your offers. Learn how to meet these objections with precision and confidence. Practise your answers so they are a natural and professional part of your presentations. Do not underestimate the power of confidence in handling objections.

**7. Omitting to involve the buyer in the journey.** The sales process is a journey for the buyer. Do you understand your own sales process? Because if you don't, then you will find it difficult to take the buyer with you. The sales process can have components such as: **Prospects → Marketing → Calls → Contacts → Appointments → Fact finds → Presentations → Sales interview → Closing Interviews → Implementation → Income earned → Follow up and after sales service**

**8. Not developing a strong trust relationship with the buyer.** People buy from people they trust. Discover how you can build trust into your interactions and dealings with prospective buyers. This can begin by a simple question such as, *"If there was a way to (insert outcome) that saved you money/time/development costs would you like to see how that worked for you and your company?"*

**9. Failing to construct good questions.** Good questions are the life blood of successful presentations. Take the time to construct questions for various parts of the sales process that are fact-finding, inclusive, open ended, closed, trial closes and rewarding for buyers. A great way to introduce these questions is to have the prefix statement, *"As I understand the situation, you are looking to (insert outcome). If this suggestion were implemented what would be the benefits for your organisation or you personally?"*

**10. Not having faith and belief in your solutions.** You need to be able to express a point of view with passion, belief and enthusiasm. This can make your proposition defensible, believable and powerfully motivating. If you don't believe in your solution, how can you expect the buyer to?

**11. Talking too much, Listening too little.** You will learn much more when asking good questions if you then listen intently to the answers. Make and take time to listen to the answers your buyers give you. When they make a strong statement that appears to support your presentation get them to repeat it back to you. *"John you made a very powerful point there about (insert fact). Could you please say that again"*? Write it down. This strongly reinforces the point for the buyer to be used later in the closing process

**12. Confusing fact-finding with presenting.** Sales require certain steps to achieve the outcomes you want. Never go into sales mode until you have been able to conduct a good fact-finding interview. This maybe on the same date. However, if you have done a competent fact find then you can say with confidence, *"Based on the facts you have given me, I believe I can come up with some ideas and alternatives*

I want to think it over

*that will be of value for you".* This leaves a note of progress and optimism for the next interview as part of your sales process.

**13. Not knowing how to close a deal.** How many ways do you know how to ask for the business that makes it easy for the buyer to begin the process by saying YES or agreeing to proceed? **Challenge:** Itemise, write down and articulate the various closes, procedures and techniques you and your people can use to complete the sales process for the buyer.

**14. Not understanding what motivates the buyer.** Your solution must have benefits, advantages and positive outcomes for the buyer. Discover what their burn is. Discover who is really driving the buying process. Is it saving money, saving time, building a solution, playing to an ego, being a user of first strike capability or just giving some peace or recognition?

**15. Not knowing when to walk away.** So much time can be wasted on buyers who procrastinate, don't own the solution or who have not the power to strongly recommend their suggestions to more senior people. You will not win every deal. Some deals take ages to complete. So have an exit strategy with these time wasters. Simple open-door exit statement such as "*John, let's hold discussions here until (insert date or event). Would you prefer to contact me by (insert date) or will I give you a bell?*"

**For more information call Jim Prigg on 0408 520453**



**KnowledgeMaster®**  
*Enriching your business*

**Knowledgemaster® International P/L.** ACN 44 137 872 952

14 Wood St. Colac Vic Australia 3250 Mob 0408 520453

E Mail [jim@knowledgemaster.com.au](mailto:jim@knowledgemaster.com.au)

website [www.knowledgemaster.com.au](http://www.knowledgemaster.com.au)

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