

Sent: Tuesday, June 10, 2003 11:29 AM
Subject: BIZ BANK: THE OCCASIONAL POKER FACED CUSTOMER

Dear Aquathin Dealer OnLine;

Occasionally you can come in front of the low, no reaction type of Customer. This will usually be when calling on a commercial / industrial Client or a residential homeowner who is prepared "for battle" (although he has no idea how low key, Customer centric oriented we are). You all know we go into the business or home knowing we are the best and that we have a solution, but these "poker faces" can be uncomfortable if you don't understand how to deal with them. Take a look at what the SPIN DOCTOR has to say.

Poker Face

In these modern times, with the "hard sell" theories of the twentieth century safely behind us, it is almost universally acknowledged among sales professionals that a "customer-centric" approach to sales makes the most sense. Focus on what the customer cares about, and show the fit between your solution and the customer's needs.

But what if the customer isn't giving you any clues about what they care about? Perhaps you've run into a buyer like this – a buyer who doesn't show approval or disapproval, who doesn't give you any indication of how you're doing. You may encounter this behavior on a sales call, during negotiations, or while giving a presentation.

Huthwaite calls these buyers "low reactors." Some people are "natural" low reactors, but sophisticated buyers often train themselves to wear a poker face. In fact, the higher the stakes, the more likely it is that buyers will deliberately curtail their reactions.

For most salespeople, a negative response from a buyer is actually easier to deal with than the absence of any response. Handling a low reactor can be tricky. Here's a list of five things you shouldn't do:

1. Don't talk faster, hoping you'll get to something that pushes a button for the buyer.
2. Don't talk too much – you may give away more information than you intended.
3. If you're making a presentation, don't depart from your planned outline to scramble for something the audience will respond to.
4. Don't over-react yourself, especially by making exaggerated claims.
5. Don't be afraid to ask questions. It may be difficult to get good answers out of low reactors, but you can't let that discourage you.
6. Deliver a professional "typed out presentation" (use Quote Bank and Tech Bank...nothing hand written) with colored catalogue sheets. Chances are this Client will make a decision over a few days or longer, and the only thing they will have left to remember you by, is what you leave behind. Autograph your work with excellence....and always, always, always, follow up. It shows you care....a rare commodity these days.

Low reactors are not necessarily hostile. They may actually be in favor of your solution, but may think they can get better terms by not offering feedback. Furthermore, they are not always the "silent type." They may do a lot of talking... but without giving anything away.

It's a good idea to anticipate the presence of a low reactor (or even a roomful of them) when you plan your sales calls and presentations. If you're ready for them, you won't be rattled. And when it's time to negotiate, bring your own poker face to the table.

Warmest regards to all...as well, your comments are always welcome and very much appreciated.

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Alfred J. Lipshultz, President

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