



Winning Ways

A publication of

Winning Ways

Volume 5, Number 9

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Winning Ways NewsBits

Winning at Sales, November class being offered now! You can sign up at:

www.WinningWaysInc.com.

All information is on the website, or you can call Joan Fletcher for details.

Review, revise and set your goals for 2008 at a one day workshop, "Get More Business in 2008".

Sign up at:

www.WinningWaysInc.com

Need an extra "push" for 4th Quarter? Sign up for a three month sales coach – call Betsy Hudson or Joan Fletcher for details!

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Turning Obstacles into Opportunities

Obstacles are a fact of life, wherever you are. Most of us would like to avoid them, but they can become the very challenges that help us spring forward to success. Whether it's the objections of a prospective customer or obstacles to career development, if you can tackle your obstacles with skill and confidence, you will find yourself progressing in leaps and bounds.

The single most important thing you can do to overcome an obstacle is to clearly identify it. This sounds simple, but it's often more challenging than people realize. Your customer may think he knows exactly why he's hesitant about buying from you: the price is too high. Or you may think you know exactly why you don't get the promotion you've been hoping for: someone in management doesn't like you. But these statements are both incomplete. Though they sound clear and simple, they're actually vague and indefinite. They can be rephrased and narrowed down into precise, specific statements that, most of the time, make their own solution apparent.

Let's look at the customer first. When he says, "The price is too high," what is he really saying? He's saying the value of your product is lower than its cost. This seems obvious, but it makes a tremendous difference in how you look at the problem. "The price is too high" is a subjective judgment, and there's no real way to argue against it. "The value is lower than the cost," however, expresses an objective comparison between two quantities: what the product will cost the customer, and what the customer will gain from having it.

Once you've made the translation from subjective to objective language, you and the customer can talk about the real issue, which is how much value your product will bring to the customer. The obstacle becomes an opportunity—for you, to gain a better understanding of your customer's wants and needs, and for your customer, to gain a better understanding of what your product can bring him.

Now, take the other example: the personality conflict with a manager. To say, "The manager doesn't like me" is another subjective, imprecise statement. To solve the problem, you need to translate it into objective, precise language.

At first glance it might seem impossible to make an objective statement about a personal problem, but it can be done. Here are some examples: "Our communication styles clash," "We have conflicting ideas about our organization's priorities," "We had a conflict early on that has caused tension ever since." All these statements describe a specific problem, and each one gives you a direction to begin looking for solutions. Once you've identified the specific problem, you can move forward: perhaps finding strategies to communicate more effectively, perhaps sitting down with a third party to resolve an ongoing source of conflict.

The key is to describe the problem in terms that give *you* something you can do about it. "She doesn't like me," is out of your hands. You can't change another person; you can only change yourself, and the way you are perceived. This leads to a strange truth: you can only solve a problem if you are part of the problem. Most of us, when considering obstacles in our lives, instinctively try to remove ourselves from them: it's someone else's fault, or it's "just the way things are." If we want to really solve problems and overcome obstacles, though we must do just the opposite. We must maximize our responsibility for every situation, not minimize it. What are you doing that contributes to the problem? What are you *not* doing that could help fix it? When you start answering these questions for every obstacle you encounter, you will start to see just how much power you really have over your path in life.

Remember: most of the time, an obstacle is really an opportunity in disguise. Instead of seeing it as a rock in your path, see it as a springboard, helping you leap to new heights!

Tips for handling obstacles in sales:

- Listen carefully. If the prospect is using vague, unclear language to express objections, ask gentle clarifying questions to help you understand where their objection is really coming from.
- Don't get defensive. Keep calm. Remember, you're not trying to argue the prospect down, you're trying to come to an agreement that benefits you both.
- Ask open-ended questions to draw out the prospect's whole objection. Often they will only give part of their objection at first; encourage them to elaborate until you understand the heart of what's holding them back.