

Give & Take

Approaching customers with a giving attitude to help close sales

By Kelly Thompson

A few months ago, while teaching an all-day sales training seminar in Orlando, Fla., someone asked me if there was going to be a section specifically dedicated to closing techniques. I often get this question or one similar to it. Everyone wants to know the magic phrase or technique for closing a sale. There are entire books written by sales trainers with varying backgrounds on the topic of closing. There are so many, in fact, that most “closes” have been given common names, such as:

- Alternative choice close;
- Apology close;
- Assumptive close;
- Balance sheet close (also known as the Ben Franklin);
- Cradle-to-grave close;
- Direct close;
- Indirect close;
- Minor point close;
- Negative assumption close;
- Possibility of loss close;
- Puppy dog close;
- Sales contest close; and
- Sharp angle close.

One of my favorite sales trainers, Tom Hopkins, spends a lot of time scripting each common technique in his book, *How to Master the Art of Selling*. When I first went into sales, I studied and tried to learn these techniques word for word. But the truth is, I was never comfortable with any of them. To me they felt too scripted and unnatural.

Don't get me wrong—as I review my own presentation, I see elements of some of these techniques, which may help me achieve a consistent 80% to 90% closing ratio. But actually making a determination of which close I should be using in a given sales presentation never felt natural to me. Maybe it's because I have always

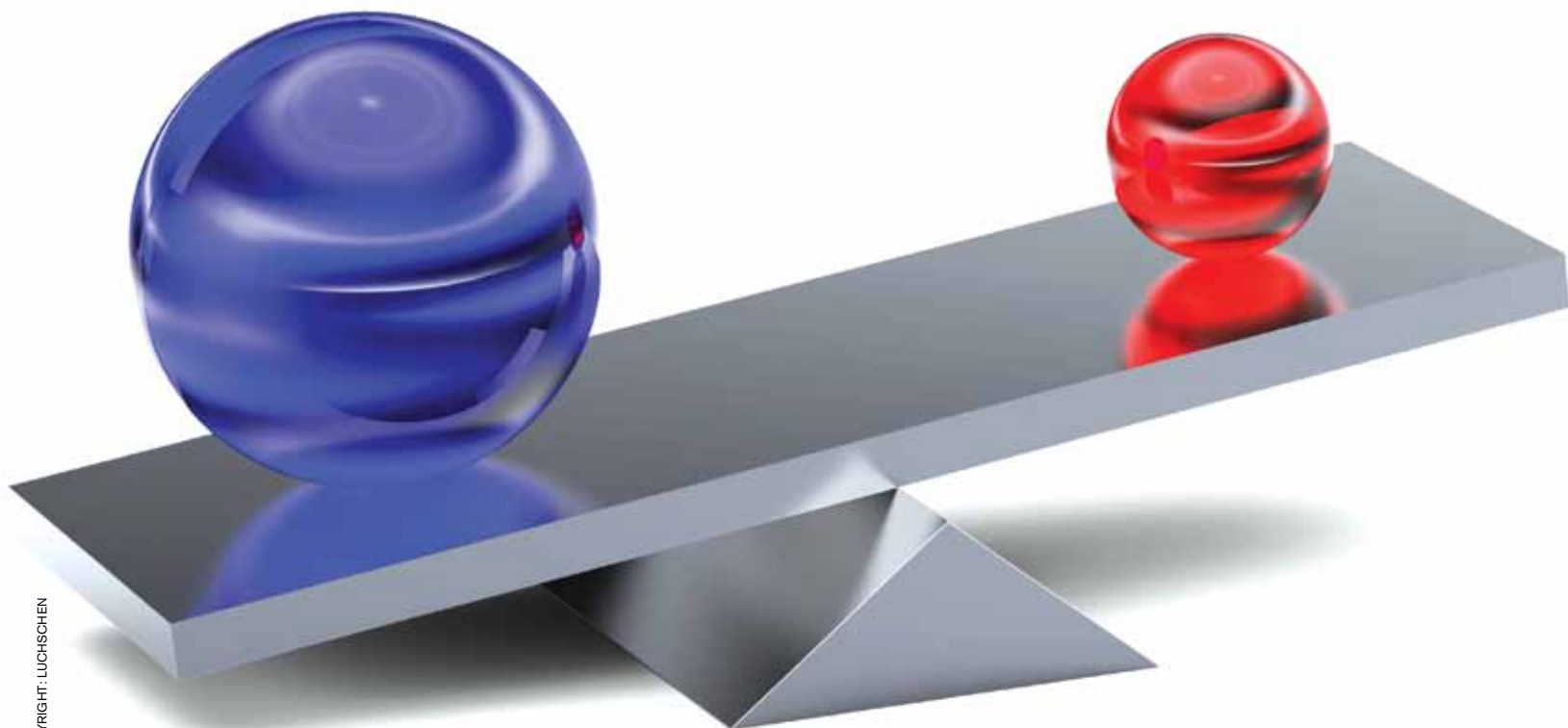
tried to treat my customers the way I would want to be treated—and I cannot stand when I am in the market for something, especially a big-ticket item, and the salesperson starts using one of those techniques on me. The techniques obviously work, however, because there are many salespeople out there learning and using them and people are still buying things—so I have to admit that I could be wrong about all of this. But I also will state emphatically that I do not think I am, and thousands of customers, my closing ratio and the closing ratios of the sales professionals I have trained seem to support my opinion on the matter.

In my opinion, closing techniques are hogwash—all except for one.

Give More Than You Take

You will not find a chapter on closing in my book, *Flowing to Success (An Excellent Book With a Cheesy Title for the Water Treatment Sales Professional)*. That is because the entire book tells the reader how to close. It's simple: If you believe that you are giving more than you are taking from your customers, you will never have a problem asking them to allow you to serve them.

Imagine you are driving down a barren highway one evening just before dusk in an area where there is no cell phone reception. You are several miles from the next exit when you pass an obviously broken-down car. A few hundred yards farther along is a young woman walking in the direction of the exit. Would you be comfortable pulling over and asking her if she wanted a ride to the exit? I believe most of the people reading this would likely want to help this person without asking for anything in return. But the question is, would the woman accept the offer? There are certainly factors that may increase or decrease the likelihood of her accepting your help. If you are driving a windowless van and you seem threatening, she may



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decide it is better to walk to the exit. On the other hand, if you are in a company-wrapped car and you seem clean-cut and sincere, she may be more inclined to accept. Heck—it may be as simple as you being a woman yourself. But the bottom line is that if you are genuine and sincere, all you can do is offer to help. You try to present yourself as genuine and sincere, but ultimately, it is up to her whether she accepts your offer.

This is exactly what I think sales should be about. In a sales presentation, we have to first determine what the customer's needs are. Once we have done so and if we are able to give them more value than the money we are asking for, then closing should be nothing more than a sincere offer to help them. Not every person is going to accept your offer, but that is his or her right. If there are more people declining your offer than accepting, I would recommend taking a look in the mirror to see if you are doing something that is making them believe you are not sincere, or looking at what you are offering to make sure you are giving more than you are taking.

This is less of a technique or strategy than an attitude. Approach every sales situation with a desire to help, and your customers will either accept your offer or they will not. If you find yourself nervous about your prices, either

figure out how to justify them through intangible offerings or go sell something else. Please, for the sake of our industry and the sales profession, do not think the answer to selling a high-ticket item is to trick or manipulate

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the customer into buying something. There are enough people out there doing this already, and it is why consumers mistrust sales people in general.

I doubt you will find the "give more than you take" close in any books out there, but I am confident that if you try it, you will not only see positive results in your closing ratio, but you also will feel good about what you do for a living. **WQP**

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