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SHANE
DECKER

ON SALES STRATEGIES

Avoid Your Best Guess

GUIDE YOUR CUSTOMER TO HER OWN PURCHASING DECISIONS.

I hate failure. I bet you do, too. When you have to guess which of two items your customer will like better, you've got a 50 percent chance of guessing wrong. Those are bad odds.

I'm sure it's happened to you before: Your client is looking at two items and asks your opinion: "Which one do you like the best?" She's doing this because she values your professionalism and expertise (which is a good thing), and she wants to gain self-confidence by borrowing from *your* confidence. You're helping her make a decision on something that's going to last a lifetime and be passed down to the next generation, so it's a make-or-break moment.

Too many sales are returned because salespeople make decisions for the client too quickly or the client feels pushed. If she prefers the item that is opposite of the one you said you liked best, chances are you just killed the sale.

Instead of making a snap decision or trying to force one of the items on your client, turn her question around. Answer her question with a question: "Well, which one do *you* like best?" Then pause three to five seconds and give her a moment to think.

THREE THINGS CAN HAPPEN:

❶ She picks up the one she likes most and tries it on again. Then you say, "So this is it?" Close it.

❷ She says, "I like this one the most." You reply, "Then this is the one you should have." Close it.

❸ She pauses or says, "I don't know." If this happens, she's still thinking about it. At this time, romance one of them a little more — the one you think she's going to love the most — because she's waiting for you to help her make a decision. This is also the perfect time to bring in another sales associate, manager or owner and explain to them what the client is thinking and have the one on your right be the one that they help you sell. (See my column from the November 2009 issue on "The Right-Hand Rule" or search for "Decker right-hand" on instoremag.com.)

The third option is your last resort. First, you want to give your customer a chance to make up her own mind, and you follow up with a reassurance close. Your chances of closing the sale at this point are very, very high because she's just taken ownership of one of the pieces. However, if she still can't make up her mind, then and only then do you choose one and begin to romance and team-sell it.

Don't let your customer set you up for failure. You're not a mind reader — you're more like a jewelry therapist. Help your customer find her own answers whenever possible!

SHANE DECKER has provided sales training for more than 3,000 stores worldwide. Contact him at (317) 535-8676 or at ex-sell-ence.com