

Flipping a “Not Now” to a “Yes, Let’s Get Started!”

By Caryn Kopp, Chief Door Opener®

It was 4pm on a Thursday and I was sitting in my car outside Starbucks. It had been one of those days. You’ve probably had one like this too. Phone call followed by phone call followed by meetings and then more phone calls. I had one more call to go. One call standing in between me and the latte I really wanted. The call was with Andrea, a prospect I met a few months back. She was very interested in our Door Opener® Service. She said to me, “Caryn, I can close a sale most of the time when I’m in front of the right prospects. I just can’t get in front of enough of the right prospects! Can you help?” I told her she came to the right place and we could help her get in the door with difficult to reach decision makers. She reviewed our proposal and on this day in my car at 4pm she was going to give me her answer.

After exchanging pleasantries she said, “Caryn, this service is a perfect fit for us. It’s exactly what we need.” I was feeling really good about how the conversation started!! This was going to be an easy close! Then she added, “However.” Uh oh. Perhaps this wasn’t going to be so easy! “We will be making several expenditures over the next few months so I’d like to revisit this idea in about six months. We should be ready to move forward at that time.” Has that ever happened to you? A prospect says you are the answer to his/her prayers and then says the timing isn’t quite right?

It wouldn’t have been wrong for me to say, “I understand. I’m a business owner too. We have expenses we have to manage and I will contact you in six months to continue our discussion.” But, that’s not what I did. That wouldn’t have flipped the “Not now” to a “Yes, let’s get started!” at that moment. And my goal was to get a “Yes!” while I sat in my car. I said, “Andrea, when we first started speaking you told me that finding more new clients was the most important thing to you this year. In fact, you said your investors want to see more sales.” She said, “That’s right.” I said, “You also told me that you’ve tried other initiatives to grow sales and nothing has worked so far. You tried putting your customer service people into sales roles and they didn’t want to do that job. You tried hiring salespeople but you didn’t have time to train and manage them. You even tried doing the sales yourself but your time was better spent working on the business, not finding new prospects.” She said, “That’s right.” I said, “Let me ask you this one question. If we don’t proceed together on this project, how will you achieve your goal of having more new clients?” There was silence on the other end of the phone. It lasted a long time. I waited silently. Then, I heard a big sigh. When she spoke she said, “You’re right. If we don’t do this initiative, we can’t achieve our goals. Ok, let’s get started.” After closing the sale I left my car and started walking toward Starbucks. I thought to myself that staying in the car to have that conversation was better than having a latte!!

There are many lessons about business development in this personal story.

- It takes longer to roll up your sleeves and get into the conversation that uncovers the real objection and overcomes it. But, it’s worth the extra time!
- Asking what we call “High Gain” questions early in the sales process will provide you with valuable ammunition later on, if there are objections or sales stall. Being a good listener and note-taker are critical skills in order to best leverage the information learned.
- Keep track of all notes and next steps in one location (CRM, Excel spreadsheet, piece of paper, etc.) and review prior to any meeting, call or email.

- Prepare for each communication by identifying your objective, your prospect's objective, questions as well as answers for prospect objections. It was no accident that I knew what to say in response to Andrea's objection. That was one of the objections I identified before our call and had prepared an effective response.
- Remember, the prospect is the most important factor in the sales equation.

I often say that closing a sale is a simple executional detail of business development well done. Think of what went right along the way in this process that helped me achieve this outcome.

One important note is that what occurred came from several strategic, purposeful steps that anyone (seller or non-seller) can take. It is possible to flip a prospect answer. You can do it too! Dig in and stay focused on the ultimate goal. Success will follow. Happy hunting!

Caryn Kopp is the Chief Door Opener® at Kopp Consulting, LLC, whose [Door Opener Service](#) helps clients secure initial meetings with high-level, hard-to-reach prospect decision makers. Reach her at www.koppconsultingusa.com