

# Sandler Brief®

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## You Don't Have to Look Both Ways...if You Never Cross the Street

Imagine the impact on your life if the fear of being struck by an oncoming vehicle prevented you from ever crossing a street. There would be many occasions where your journey would come to a halt—nowhere to turn and no further progress possible.

The fear of rejection will do the same for your sales career journey.

Rejection is a normal feature on the sales landscape. Not every prospect will want to talk to you. And, not every prospect who does take the time to talk to you will become a client. Some will reject your product or service: they won't view it as an appropriate solution to solving their problems or achieving their goals. Others will indirectly reject you. That is, they will have an existing relationship with a supplier; and nothing you say or do will give them reason to disrupt it and develop a relationship with you.

To shield themselves from the daily onslaught of rejection, many salespeople have devised a simple, but effective defense mechanism—they avoid potential rejection-generating activities. Prospecting is a prime example. And, when they do interact with prospects and customers, they avoid situations that have rejection as a potential outcome. For instance, they avoid asking prospects to make commitments or decisions.

They *suggest*, "Why don't you give it some thought and I'll get in touch with you next week," rather than ask, "Do you see our approach as an appropriate solution to your challenge?" By avoiding the potential rejection scenario, they are not vulnerable to rejection; they are protected.

Protected, but weakened.

You didn't learn to safely cross the street by avoiding it. You learned by properly preparing and paying attention. You observed the speed of the oncoming vehicles and their distance from you, and taking into consideration your degree of fleet footedness, made an educated decision about the appropriate course of action. Sometimes you casually strolled across the street; other times you made a mad dash. And sometimes, you decided it was prudent not to step off the curb until the vehicles had passed. By allowing yourself to be "vulnerable" to the traffic, you developed the skill to safely cross the street.



Selling isn't any different. If you properly prepare and pay attention in the sales arena, you can minimize the potential for rejection and overcome your fear of it. Here are a few suggestions.

**Never make a call without doing your homework.** Whether it's a call to an existing customer or a cold call to a prospect, know what you are going to say. Do the research and make sure your message is relevant to their situations. "Winging it" is the quickest route to rejection.

**Thoroughly qualify opportunities.** Before beginning work on proposals or presentations, make sure you have uncovered exactly what the prospects need and what they expect from you, whether they have the resources to obtain it and are willing to make the required investments, and how they will make their ultimate buying decision. Only then can you decide if you can put together a presentation that represents a best fit. Developing presentations without such information invites flat-out rejection or stalls and put-offs—a milder form of rejection.

**Get a commitment.** Whether you're meeting with a prospect for the first time or you are going back to make a presentation, get a commitment from the prospect about what will occur. For example, if specific information is required to determine the suitability of your product or service for the prospect's situation, ask the prospect to commit to sharing that information with you at your upcoming meeting. If you schedule a presentation where you expect to obtain a buying decision, ask the prospect to commit to making one. If a prospect is going to reject your request, it's better for it to occur early in the process while you have an opportunity to choose a more appropriate course of action.

If you are going to work in the sales arena, you can't escape the possibility of rejection. However, by being prepared and paying attention, you can minimize its impact, minimize your fear of it, and develop the skill to "cross the street."

### Three Questions...One Answer

What element is essential for obtaining a client?

What element is essential for retaining a client?

What element, when ignored, will facilitate losing a client?



The answer to all three questions is "Trust."

So, what is "trust" and how do you develop it with prospects and preserve it when they become clients?

Trust is built on three elements: credibility, accessibility, and reliability.

Credibility, whether we are talking about prospects or clients, refers to having a message that's relevant and demonstrates your understanding of the recipient's situation. Today's technology—web sites, blogs, e-mail, white papers, social media, webcasts, webinars, and on-line meetings—has made it easier than ever to get your message in front of a targeted audience. Wasting their time with information that doesn't help them solve problems or further goals will do little to build trust and can erode the trust that has been established.

Getting your credible message in front of prospects and clients is a wasted effort if you are not accessible to provide information for prospects when requested, or answer questions or resolve problems for clients as they occur. If they can't "trust" that you'll be there when they need you, then they won't trust you.

Reliability, the third element of trust, is an essential ingredient for any relationship. If you make a commitment to a prospect or client...keep it. No excuses. Prospects and clients won't trust you until they can rely on you to follow up and follow through as promised.

Whether we are talking about prospects and clients or friends, family, and colleagues, trust is an essential ingredient. When present, it can cement a relationship and, when absent, cause it to crumble.

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