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What's Behind the Excuse

Have you ever gone through the process, asked the questions, and presented your solution only to have the prospect give you a reason why they can't buy today. For example: "I need to talk to my spouse" I'd like to think it over a bit", "I'll get back to you in a few days," "I'd like to run this by my staff." Any of these sound familiar?

I call these "put offs". Unlike objections, put offs are not connected to your product or service. Put offs are designed to encourage you to believe your prospect would otherwise buy from you today if it were not for the hurdle outlined in the put off. The reality is, a put off usually has nothing to do with the reason the prospect won't buy today. After all, how many times have you told a salesperson you would "think about it" when indeed you had no interest in or intention of buying?

Prospects often use put offs because they either have no interest or want to shop around. If so, why don't they just come out and say so? It's simple. Already the customer knows that they don't like your product, and will have to deal with you trying to convince them they need it. Who wants that? Also, it's very awkward for your prospect to say, "Thanks for your help, but I am going to see if I can buy from your competitor now!"

Let me give you some techniques to help you deal with these situations. Let's use the "I have to talk to my spouse" for our example. This put off works especially well because you can't make the spouse magically appear in front of you. The prospect knows you will have to let them leave without pressuring them to buy because you want them to return. This doesn't have to mean you're at the end of the process. I know what your sales training class taught you...ask the prospect if they can call their spouse now. See if they can get a time to bring the spouse back etc. The reality is, you are working under the assumption they the spouse is actually a factor.

So let's pry into it a bit. First, tell them it makes sense to talk it over with their spouse. They get a sense you have taken their put off, hook, line and sinker. Then say, "Knowing your husband/wife, (pause) when you tell him/her you were in to see me, what do you think he/she will say?" They will often say "I don't know." Follow up in a light hearted way with, "Well if you had to guess."

Now, there are a few things they can say here. The first thing they might say is, "I don't know" for a second time. You can follow it up with this technique. "Mr. Prospect can I share something with you?" Prospect, "Sure." I often find that when people tell me they want to talk to their spouse, it's usually for one of a couple reasons. One, they are afraid their spouse will say no, or two, they are not sure about something themselves. Would you be uncomfortable if I were to ask which might be the case here?"

You have now asked the question without really asking the question. It's hard for them to be offended and they might just fess up as to what their real apprehension is. If they stick to their story, (need to talk to the spouse) kindly say, "I get the feeling you are concerned he/she is probably going to say no!" Wrestle with them just a bit on this, ask them why and get them to validate their put off. If you feel they are holding something back, say, "I get the feeling that you might be undecided a little yourself." Don't be afraid to gently poke into this, you might find a way to turn them around as long as you communicate with sincerity so they know you care. Statistics show you are not likely to see them again so why let them get away with a lame put off? Either way you'll know where you stand. Remember, you will have a better chance of turning your prospect into a customer once you find out what's behind the excuse.