

The goal of this section is to provide fitness professionals with the insight and tools that will help get people involved with the products and services conducive to obtaining their goal(s). Yes, we're speaking about sales, but not in the high-pressure, "Slick Willie" sense that may come to mind. Like most of us, you are in this industry to help people gain knowledge and utilize tools and strategies to enhance their lives and community. Will that happen if they don't get involved with the products and services you know they need? No! They will continue "shooting in the dark" or get taken advantage of by marketing ploys that distort the truth.

This section is about solution-based selling - determining what someone wants or needs, assessing if they have the knowledge and resources to get there on their own, and providing solutions that best fit their needs. This is a win-win scenario that requires passion and integrity. It is not about selling something people don't need or want - it's about showing people the value of what you have to offer and helping them get what they want.

Overview

People make decisions intellectually, but they buy emotionally. Helping them discover those key emotions that drive them to take action is a critical component of any successful selling strategy. The good news is that if the right approach is used, this process is relatively easy and quite fulfilling. The tools found here in this simple five-step process are designed to empower you with an approach that will help you increase your sales skills and expand your level of influence. These five steps are:

1. Become the trusted advisor
2. Uncover their reasons
3. Establish a commitment
4. Present their solution
5. Overcoming objections

Step One – Become the Trusted Advisor

If you were struggling with a problem that was causing you a lot of pain and upset, would you be more apt to trust advice from a close friend or a complete stranger? Assuming that you were confident that your close friend had your best interest in mind, you would probably trust the close friend. Since most of the prospects you will encounter are people who have never met you before, we need to establish trust and rapport.

Rapport is sharing a common view with someone else. It creates a significant bond between people. In fact, because of the power of the bond that rapport creates, the person with the greatest amount of certainty invariably ends up influencing the other. This is especially important in our environment where emotionally charged topics such as body image, food habits, and lifestyle choices are discussed.

Here are some proven ways to develop rapport quickly.

1. *Mirroring.* People feel comfortable with others who are most like themselves. You can increase their level of comfort with you by simply mirroring their body language, tonality, rate of speech and even some of the key words and phrases they use. In fact, 55% of rapport is developed through non-verbal communication.
2. *Questions.* People feel most comfortable talking about themselves and what's most important to them. By genuinely asking them questions about their needs, desires and goals, they will begin to trust that you have their best interests in mind.
3. *Active Listening.* Whatever they say, make sure you listen intently – even take notes if you have to – it will confirm that you truly do care. Tell them you understand when you do, and seek clarification when you need it. Additionally, pay attention to your own gut instincts. If you get the sense that they are feeling uncomfortable with something, get it out in the open, solve for it, and continue to move forward with the bond you've created.

Step Two – Uncover Their Reasons

People buy for their reasons, not yours. Even if you have the best programs and products in the galaxy, no one will buy into them if the reasons for doing so don't *resonate and relate* to them on a personal and emotional level.

Now that you are a trusted advisor, you will have permission to ask the questions necessary to determine what it is they really want and why it is important to them. Pay special attention to the “why it is important to them” piece as this will reveal their true reasons for wanting to achieve the goals they have set. Getting in better shape is typically not the true goal – the goal is how a person will feel (i.e. what it will mean to them) when they achieve it that inspires them to take action and motivates them to accomplish it.

In addition, asking the right questions up front will also eliminate many future objections down the road.

Here are some valuable sample questions you can use to uncover their goals and reasons. Be a sympathetic investigator who is here to solve for one of their greatest challenges. Get all the facts before offering solutions.

- *Get clear about what they want*
 - In order to best help you, we need to discuss all aspects of your goal and why you are here. Is that a fair statement? Great. You start.
 - What would you like to change or improve, if anything?
 - What were you hoping we could do for you?
 - What brings you in here today?
- *Make sure their “what” is clear and specific. Never stop after a generic unspecific goal statement such as, “I want to lose weight”*
 - Help me with this. How much weight would you like to lose?
 - I'm not quite clear on “x” (insert anything you need clarification on), can you tell me more about that?

- Can you do me a favor? Paint me an exact picture – even down to the details – of what you would like to achieve.
- *Reveal the emotional importance*
 - How will your life be different when you achieve this goal? How will you feel once you've (restate their goal).
 - How long have you had this problem? How long have you been thinking about this?
 - How serious would you say the problem is today? Why is this so important to you?
 - What have you tried to turn things around? What did you like and what didn't you like about that approach? (Take special note on the responses here so that when you present the solution later, you can reference their likes and how your solution solves for things they didn't like previously)
 - How much is this problem costing you? (Physically, emotionally and financially.) What are some of the worst things that you are missing out on – or will miss out on – if a solution isn't found?

Step Three – Establish a Commitment

At this point we should have a solid understanding of what pains they are trying to solve for, and why it is so important to them. In order to give them the best shot at achieving their goals, it is important to establish the level of commitment they will need to be successful while continuing to maintain the rapport we've built.

- So let me get this straight, you came here because you want to achieve “x, y and z” (insert their goals in their own words), is that a fair statement? If they don't say yes, ask, “What is an accurate statement?”
- What is your timeline for accomplishing this? Why did you pick that timeframe?
- What would it mean to you to accomplish these goals? How would it make you feel?
- On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being reflective of an absolute commitment, where would you rate your personal commitment level right now as it relates to the accomplishment of the goals you just described? (Note: If they respond with less than an 8 say, “I appreciate your honesty. May I offer some insights? What we've found here in working with people over the years is that those who are successful find a way to get themselves to at least an 8 on the commitment scale. So that you have the best chance of achieving your important goals, what do you think it would take to get your commitment level to an 8, 9 or even 10?”)

Here are some other questions you can ask during the commitment phase to tease out any possible money concerns or decision-making ability issues:

- I believe we have a clear understanding of what we're trying to accomplish, Mary, but just so that there's no misunderstanding at a later date, let me know if I have this straight. You talked about the trouble you're having with (problem #1), (problem #2) and (problem #3), and it sounded like what you're hoping we can do is (solution #1), (solution #2) and (solution #3). Is that a fair statement?
- Do you have a budget set aside for this goal? Would you mind sharing it with me in round numbers?
- Assuming that we can do this for you, and that it fits into your budget and timeline, when do you see yourself moving forward with this, Mary?
- What is your typical decision-making process that you go through when deciding on a purchase like this?

Step Four – Present Their Solution

Assuming there are no other major concerns on the part of the prospect, as their **trusted advisor** you should now know very clearly whether or not your facility can solve their problems. In your presentation of the solutions you provide (nutrition guidance, personal training, memberships, group exercise classes, etc.), only focus on those that have a specific application to the problems they communicated to you. In other words, if their primary goal is to lose weight, and they don't have much time to exercise, telling them about the 67 group exercise classes you offer each week will only overwhelm them. Find the 2-3 classes that fit with their schedule and ensure they have a plan for the other 165 hours a week when they're not at the gym. Focus on what solves their problems specifically, and always start with the best solution to their biggest and most important pain.

Anything you choose to show them must relate specifically to what they shared with you earlier. Let them see it, touch it, ask questions about it, and even give them sample experiences of it. Make the solutions real for them. Let them know what the costs are during the presentation of the solutions.

Once you are finished, if you have done your up-front rapport building and question-asking homework right, your prospect should be ready to make a buying decision.

- Get a pulse during your solution presentation: Mary, since we've gone through quite a bit together so far, and since there's still more that we can show you, I'd like to ask you: On a 0-10 scale, zero meaning you have no interest in our service, and ten meaning that you've already decided to get started with our service, where are you?
 - If they are less than a 10, ask: Mary, what do you need to see in order to get to a 10? Remember some people want to analyze the information before making a decision. If this is the case, be sure to follow up with them within 24 to 48 hours.

- At the end of your presentation: Mary, are you 100% comfortable that our service will solve the problem(s) you shared with me today?

Once you have the yes, share with them the next steps to get them started, and thank them for their business.

Step Five – Overcoming Objections

Regardless of how smoothly the sales process flows, objections are inevitable. Don't view an objection as a "no", but as, "I'm not comfortable yet" or, "I need more information". The client is there for a need or desire that they have already thought through and settled on. The primary way to overcome objections is to make sure you have asked all the right questions. For example, if you ask an individual how much time is realistic for them to dedicate to their exercise program, a "not sure I have enough time" objection will not occur. Let's take a moment to look at the most common objections: time, spouse/significant other, I want to think about it, and money.

Time - This really should not be an objection if you asked the "time" question identified previously. Remember, obtaining health and fitness goals is not just about the "one hour" spent in the gym or exercising, it is about the other 23 hours as well. Everyone has the time; the question becomes, is the goal really important enough?

Spouse/significant other - Now, this could be a legitimate reason for not buying today; however, it could also be used to delay the sales process. Your task is to find out if the spouse objection is legitimate, but to do so in a tactful way. Asking a question like, "Mrs. Jones, I can see you are extremely motivated to get started toward realizing your goals. You are without a doubt ready to change. Let me ask you a question, "Is your spouse as motivated as you are in this quest to reach your fitness goals? This journey you will embark on today will require support from the people closest to you, which in most cases are typically your friends, family and especially your spouse. Do you need to talk this over with your husband before you make a decision?" Mrs. Jones may say something like, "Are you kidding me? He spends way more money than this on golf!" Game over, that objection is no longer viable. If Mrs. Jones does need to consult with her spouse, wonderful, insert yourself in the process via telephone or set an appointment for the spouse to come in so you can properly represent your offering. You now have an additional prospect.

I want to think about it - This objection, like the "time" objection, can be easily overcome by asking the right questions early in the process. For example, "Mrs. Jones how long have you been thinking about losing the 40 pounds you spoke of?" Follow that with, "On a scale of 1 to 10 how important is this to you? The answers to these simple questions will overcome such an objection and bring clarity long before the close of the sale.

Money - This objection is usually the easiest to avoid if you, once again, ask the right questions but is the most difficult to overcome if you have not. You need to determine where your prospect is currently spending money that could be allocated toward their health and fitness goals. Some of the most common areas for disposable income are hobbies (golf, water sports, tennis, quilting), social activities (night clubs, movies, concerts, eating out), coffee drinks, etc... Asking Mrs. Jones what hobbies she is involved with is part of building rapport as you become a trusted advisor and important in overcoming objections. People commonly spend \$10 a day and often can't remember where. If Mrs. Jones shares that she has a café latte three to four times per week, that represents approximately \$60 per month. Mr. Jones could be spending much more than that on golf. So if, after representing the training package or membership that is in question, Mr. Jones comments about the cost, you could reply, "One less round of golf each week could fully fund your 40-pound weight loss. Do you feel that would be worth it?" It is much easier to show people where money already exists in their budget vs. feeling as though it needs to be found in addition.

In conclusion, remember you are the expert in the mind of your prospects. A physician writes a prescription assuming it will get filled and it does. You need to function with the same mindset because, like the physician, you are not representing anything that won't benefit your prospect. If you continue to receive these common objections, revisit your presentation and the questions you probably are NOT asking. Role-play with co-workers who are successful at getting people involved, and you will learn a great deal, but make the presentation your own. Your prospects need your help, the level of overweight and obesity in the U.S. attests to that. As a fitness professional you should understand that you have the tools that could literally mean the difference between life and death for your prospects. Practicing and refining your skills in sales isn't only about money, it's about helping people.