



on  
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Due Diligence      Go to Market Strategy & Execution      Revenue Acceleration      Partnering & Asset Sales

## The Joys and Revelations of Objections

How to Process Objections and Turn Them Into Sales

When you encounter an objection, are you joyful?

You should be and you can be, if you follow the techniques below. How? By understanding that an objection is a natural and absolutely necessary part of the process to get to agreement with your prospect, and from which, you can make a sale.

Why is getting an objection revealing? Because it means that you've done a good enough job for your prospect to be willing to talk with you and give you a problem to solve in order to make the sale. Unless your prospect buys immediately, he or she always has objections, some may just be "hidden", or unspoken.

As the modification to the old joke goes, if you don't like objections, consider the alternatives. In the real world, the alternative to an objection (or a series of them) is almost never an easy sale made to a prospect mesmerized by your oratory. The alternative to an objection is generally "we'll get back to you."

How well does that usually work for you?

An objection turns the conversation from a monologue to a dialogue, from your static presentation to a dynamic interchange with your prospect that you could help to turn into success for everyone. I'll describe how, when you get an objection, you can go from being a "one man (or woman) band" to a world class symphony conductor.

So, maestro in the making, welcome to our discussion about objections. They're potentially fun, and they're potentially profitable. I'll show you how.

Let's start with the two possible definitions of "objection".



**Objection** *n.* 1. A reason not to buy. 2. A request for more information.

definition

Your attitude and frame of mind are foundational and critical. Therefore, we're always

going to assume that an objection is the second definition.

Next, let's define "prospect."



**Prospect** *n.* Someone you want to convince to take a certain action.



**example**

Generally, in business, a prospect is someone who you want to buy your product. However, your prospect can also be an employee who you want to treat the company's customers better, an investor you want to help to finance your business, a board member you want to convince to let you pursue your strategy, or a boss you want to give you a raise. The technique I'm about to describe works for any type of prospect.

Like the word "objection" the word "sales" can also be defined in one of two ways, and it's important to make the distinction between these two definitions and choose which definition guides us.



**definition**

**Sales** *v.* 1. Doing anything necessary (including lying and tricking) to get your prospect to do something (generally to buy your product at the highest price possible) that is only in your interest, not theirs. 2. Getting your prospect to do what you want them to do and that is also in their best interest.

Is "selling" something to be proud of? You bet it is, if your objective is the one stated in the second definition. If, as a salesperson, you're not proud of what you do, you may have compromised your ethics and be acting more in line with the first definition. I'm going to assume that, for the purposes of this newsletter, your definition of selling, like mine, is the second one.

The techniques I'm going to describe are not intended to be used as a clever way to fool your prospect into buying. The intention is to help you to understand what the prospect wants and is in their best interest, so you can give it to them.

The first step to successfully work with objections is to validate the objection and the person making it, and then to make certain you understand the objection.



**First rule: Don't panic! Instead, validate, understand the function of the objection, re-state it and ask for verification of your understanding.**



**example**

For example, consider the following objection: "We'd like to do business with you, but you're a new company. We'd rather go with a more established vendor."

If it's true that you're a start-up (as is the case with many companies I advise), this may seem like an objection that will keep you from making a sale. However, we're going to view the objection consistent with our definition 2., above, "a request for more information". Then, if you validate and look at the function of the objection as opposed to the form of it, you may be able to solve it. Before we talk about form and function, however, let's first talk about validation.



If it is even remotely reasonable, make certain that the first thing you do is to acknowledge the validity of the question. The reason to do this is to deflate any "attack" if there is one and make certain that the conversion is characterized by both you and the prospect being on the same team to solve the problem, as opposed to playing "got ya".

Whatever you do, don't get into the equivalent of a ping pong match, going back and forth, answering and giving questions in an argument format. You may win the argument, but lose the sale. Before anything else, you need to make certain that the dynamics of the conversation are positive. If the dynamics are confrontational and one in which you are perceived as defensive and / or argumentative, it is up to you to change the dynamics to one in which you are perceived as reasonable and credible. Without positive dynamics, how can you possibly succeed?

As a second benefit, when you create positive dynamics, if the questioner is initially confrontational, your attitude and technique will tend to change his or her attitude to be more positive as well.



If you are being attacked, take the steam out of the attack. Assume that the person asking has good intentions and then act like he or she does, irrespective of whether or not this is true. If you do this, even if the question was not asked with good intentions, it will have a greater chance to wind up that way.



### example

Here's a response to the objection of your company being too new that both validates the question and questioner and seeks to understand the function of the question: "I understand how you could be concerned. If I were in your situation, I would be concerned as well, and what you're doing is just good, solid, vendor evaluation. Thank you for bringing it up and allowing me to address it. Could you please tell me more about why you feel it is better for you to go with an established vendor? For example, what are you concerned might happen if you went with a newer company like ours?"

In answer, your prospect may say something like, "If you go out of business, we won't be able to support the software we purchased from you."

In the example above, now that you know what the prospect is thinking (as opposed to guessing about it), and also helped the prospect to think through their fear, you can give a response more likely to directly address the real issue, and to be successful.

The next step is to find out if what you're being told or asked is a true objection, or a false objection.



definition

**True Objection** *n.* One which, if it did not exist, the prospect would take the action you want.



definition

**False Objection** *n.* One which, even if it were accurately addressed, the prospect still would not take the action you want.



### how to test this:

To determine if an objection is a true objection or a false objection, ask this question: "If [that condition did not exist], would you [take the action]?" If the prospect says "no", it's a false objection, so don't solve that objection. Instead, you now have an opportunity to find the true objection by following up with something like "OK, then if [the condition described] is not keeping you from [taking the action you recommend], what is?" and starting the cycle again.

If you use the technique above, you may get several false objections in a row and have to keep asking variations of the same question. Eventually, however, your prospect will answer "Yes" to your question. At that point, you'll have a true objection.

As an alternative to this technique, here's an example a conversation where the salesperson doesn't find out if the objection is a false objection or a true objection.



**example**

"I need delivery by Tuesday."

"We can deliver by Tuesday. We'll throw in rush delivery at no charge."

"But I don't like the color. I want it in green."

"OK. We'll have it custom painted and throw that in as well."

"That won't really help that much. The cost is an issue."

"OK. I'll take 10% off the price."

"Yes, but ..."

You get the idea. This could go on until you get the famous and "we'll let you know", followed by multiple non-returned phone calls and you not really knowing why you failed. What's happening above is that the prospect is not giving the true objection because the salesperson is not helping the prospect to discover it.

But aren't you supposed to be the conductor? Don't you want to know what the true objection is, before trying to solve a bunch of false objections that aren't the things keeping the prospect from buying?

If you do, let's see an example of how you can answer the question by using the technique:



**example**

"If we sufficiently reduced the risk of your users not being able to be supported, would we then have a deal?"

If the prospect said "No" to this question, you would have a false objection. As mentioned before, you never answer false objections. Here's the reasons why:

- The answer will not determine if you get the sale or not, so you will spend time and focus on irrelevant points and thereby reduce the effectiveness of your communication and the likelihood that you'll be successful.
- After a false objection is made and answered, there are only two possible outcomes: 1) success in answering the false objection (which will bring up another objection; see above); or, 2) failure in answering the false objection (which you thought was a true objection), and a failed end to the process.
- If you answer false objections, the dynamics of the conversation turn into something resembling a ping pong match: your prospect serves up a problem, you try to solve it, your prospect gives you another problem, you try to solve that, etc.

**ta**  
technique

In a complex sale, you may get to several true objections. When this happens, your objective is to get to a comprehensive set of true objections (the total of which must be addressed successfully for the sale to be made) before answering them. Once you've gotten to that comprehensive but limited set, you're ready to answer.

Once you've determined the final set of true objections that, if answered to the satisfaction of your prospect, you'll have a sale, you can break true objections into two categories:

1. Those that are valid.
2. Those that are misunderstandings that more or better information would help to address.

Using the technique above, here's example of how to deal with a misunderstanding:



**example**

Prospect: "I don't like the color blue. I like the color chartreuse."

You: "If I could get it for you in chartreuse, would that satisfy you to make the purchase?"

Prospect / Customer: "Yes."

You: "George, you're in luck, chartreuse is the only other color we offer!"

As you can see, true objections that are misunderstandings are easy to deal with. You've just got to use technique to get to that point. What if the objection is valid?



If the objection is valid, treat your prospects with respect and acknowledge the objection as valid. Then, see if there are ways to overcome it. If you can overcome it, you can make a sale. If you can't overcome it, well, you can't.



**example**

Prospect: "I don't like the color blue. I like the color chartreuse."

You: "If I could get it for you in chartreuse, would that satisfy you to make the purchase?"

Prospect: "Yes."

You: "I'm sorry, George, our widgets only come in blue and there's nothing we can do about that. However, in our discussions, you mentioned other things about our widgets that were much better than the competition, for example, there price, durability, and our warranty. How would you rate these in importance relative to color?"



**example**

As a final example, let's return to the objection about your company being too new and your prospect's fear that your company may go out of business and, as a result, leave your prospect with software that would not be supported.

You: "If, to your satisfaction, we sufficiently reduced your risk of your users not being able to be supported, would that sufficiently address your concern?"

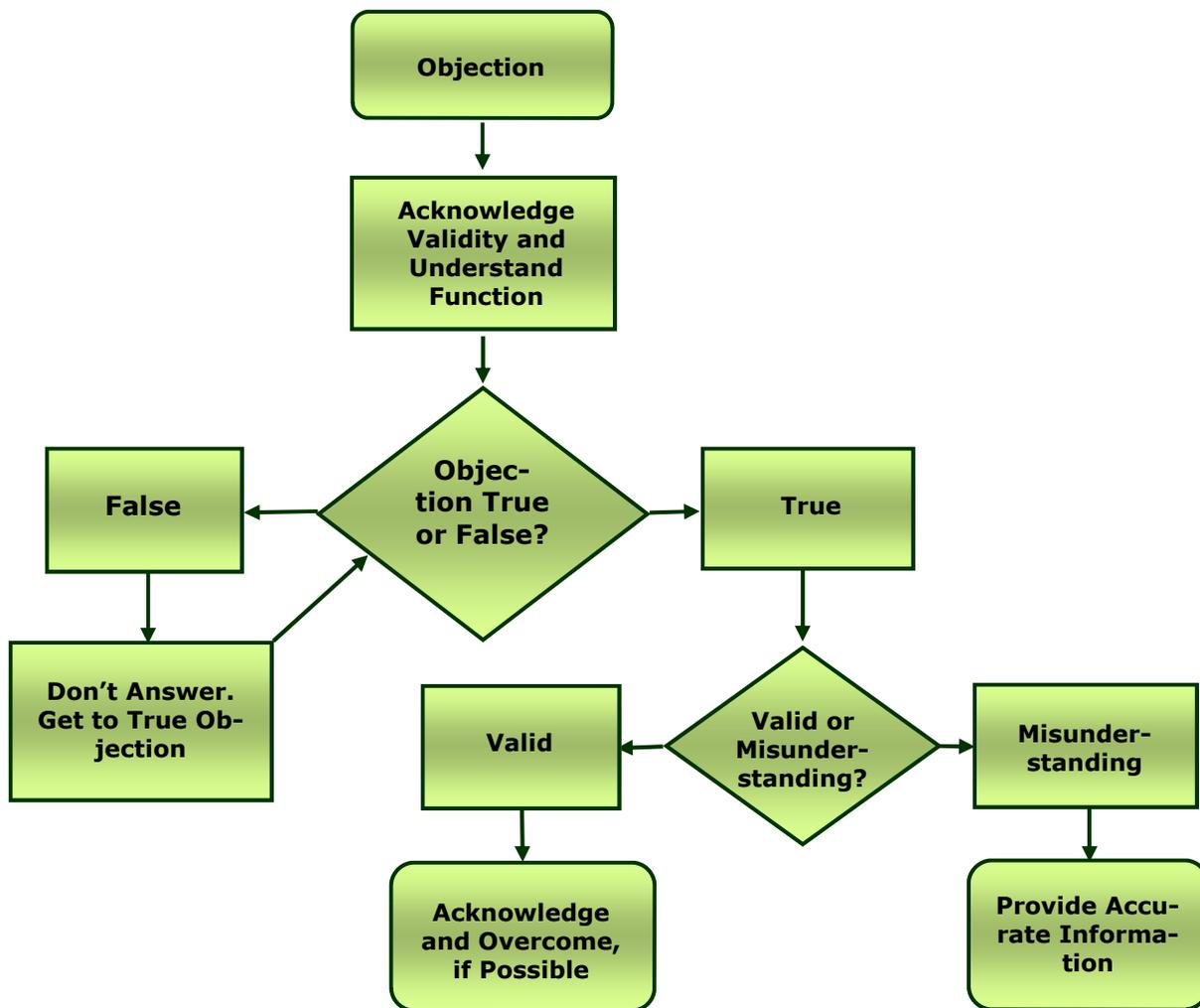
Prospect: "Yes, I believe we would". (It's a true objection. You're ready for the crescendo.)

You: "Great. I think we should be able to satisfy your concerns, and there are a number of things we could do. For example, we are more than willing to put our software in an escrow account with the stipulation that, if we go out of business, the code is released to your IT department and that way, your users would be guaranteed of support. Does this work for you?"

Prospect (now a customer): "Yes, it does. I'm so glad we were able to work this out!"

Now that you know the techniques, try them at the office and at your home. When you apply the techniques to successfully process objections, you put you and your prospect in the same orchestra, playing beautiful harmony.

Here's a flow chart summarizing the process:



In the next issue, we'll talk about demonstrations: when to give them, when not to.

#### About Chuck Bolotin

Chuck founded, funded, operated and sold two companies. The On Target Consultants Process™ he developed, and the success he has achieved applying it has made him an expert in bringing products to market in virtually any vertical, many times when the target market is not known in advance.

Chuck is available for talks to your organization as well as personalized consulting assignments.

