

# The Sales Ladder

## A Simple Psychology for Closing the Sale

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I have trained literally thousands of Sales professionals over the last twenty years. Through this experience I have observed well over ten thousand presentations and consistently notice the following process that goes on in the mind of a Prospective Buyer as the sales person presents his or her offer. Knowing this information can be a powerful tool to any sales person.

Every presentation or demonstration is designed to convince someone of something, or to move them in one believable direction or another. The key word here is *believable* because it has to make sense to the Prospective Buyer. That's why companies will spend tens of thousands of dollars to create and prepare even the simplest presentation.

A presentation focuses on the benefits of a particular product or service. Created and shared properly, the presentation will ask and/or answer questions that benefit the Prospective Buyer. It will walk the Prospective Buyer through a step-by-step process to leading them to consider the Presenter's point of view, and have the Prospective Buyer moving in the same direction, and thinking like the Presenter. With the proper questions and answers, you can move almost anyone to your way of thinking or at least have them consider your viewpoint. Let's talk about how to climb "the Sales Ladder" with your Prospective Buyer.

Imagine entering into a new Prospect's office. You have a great product or service that you sell and you want their business. (By the way, there's something more important to the Prospective Buyer than their business, but that's the topic of another article.) Now imagine that you have a ladder to climb and when you reach the top, you complete the transaction. Every rung of that

ladder is a step closer to the top (where your Prospect agrees to become your Customer). Some Prospective Buyers ladder has 10 rungs, others have 30. (That difference has to do with Decision-Making Styles, another critical topic every Sales Professional should understand.) Your goal is to always keep yourself and your Prospective Buyer moving upward and never down the rungs to where you are further away from the top.

Each and every positive or affirmative response by your Prospective Buyer is a rung **up** the ladder, and every negative concern or objection is a rung **down** the ladder. The easiest way to elicit positive responses is to ask questions that your Prospect will answer "yes," affirming that he or she has just moved **up** another rung on the ladder with you. But many professional sales people do not ask positive leading questions! Their presentation leaves holes for the Prospective Buyer to voice negative objections or dwell on negative concerns. Some Prospective Buyers will never even let you know what those thoughts are. Even if your presentation is perfect, it can feel like a football play: It's perfect on paper but sometimes your Prospect goes in another direction than you expected. So you have to be prepared to act. You must remain fluid and be able to adapt to any concern or situation, and that only comes with practice.

You may be 8 rungs up a 12-rung ladder when you move to the left and "out of nowhere," your Prospective Buyer moves to the right by asking a negative question. First, you must realize that you **both** just took a step backwards down the ladder. Next, you have to answer the question with grace and confidence. Do it in an easygoing manner, and then at the end of your answer, ask a re-affirming leading question. (There is an affirming or re-affirming question to every concern or objection. If there is not, you are not with a fully qualified prospect.) Your Prospect's "yes" answer will let you know that their negative concern is gone and that he or she has just moved up with you to the next rung on the ladder.

To answer and recover from negative questions or concerns you must be fully prepared and confident with your answers. The only way you will ever get the needed preparation and confidence is by experience, and the only way to get the experience is by giving large numbers of presentations and then by evaluating each presentation. When you evaluate your presentation and the Prospective Buyers questions, evaluate your presentation and your answers honestly. Always write down what the questions were and what your answers could have and should have been. The next time out you'll improve and eventually you will become a Sales Master.

Always be professional. Use the power of knowledge responsibly. And commit yourself to mastering the Art of Sales. Our *Sales Master* seminars are designed to help you do just that. For more information, please visit [www.darrenoliverinc.com](http://www.darrenoliverinc.com).

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**About the Author, Darren B. Oliver:** Mr. Oliver has appeared on *Bloomberg TV* and *Business Briefs* with Walter Cronkite. His businesses and articles have been written up in *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Success*, *Entrepreneur*, *Money* and other national publications. In 2002, Mr. Oliver received the honor of being named *Colorado Business Man of the Year*. Thousands of clients have benefited from this information, get his new book "**Who's In Your Pocket**", available online now at <http://whosinyourpocket.net> and in book stores Fall 2007.

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