



# **Track: Customer Relationship Development**

## **Unit 10: Gaining A Commitment**

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# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

- List at least four reasons why sellers don't ask for commitment
- Describe three criteria that determine when it's time to ask for commitment
- Recognize the steps in the process of gaining commitment
- Describe the relationship between asking for commitment and building a relationship
- List at least two commitments that a seller could ask a buyer to commit to



**Review the statements below, and determine whether they are true or false.**

True/False	Statement
	Gaining a commitment is a natural by-product of a solid sales process
	Sellers routinely ask buyers for commitment
	When gaining commitment, the seller should quote a price before asking for commitment
	When a buyer sends a buying signal like "how much would that cost?" it's time to ask for commitment
	The customer's behavioral style should influence how the seller asks for commitment
	The commitment that was planned for is always the commitment that the seller should ask for

# THE 'ENERGY' SELLING PROCESS

## **E** Establish Your Plans

- Set a commitment objective
- Establish a sales cycle plan
- Create a pre-call plan



## **N** Nail Your Approach

- Make small talk to build rapport and create a positive first impression
- Read and adapt to the customer's behavioral style
- Introduce yourself and your LDC in terms of outcomes that your products and services create for customers

## **E** Engage the Prospect in Meaningful Dialogue with Thoughtful Questions

- Ask open-ended questions to learn about the customer's business and industry, your competition, budget, decision making process and timeframe
- Listen actively and restate the prospect's needs to gain confirmation

## **R** Roll Out Your Solution

- Identify the problems that you can solve or goals that you can impact by leveraging the products/services of the LDC
- State the worth of the solution in both quantitative and qualitative terms
- Share a compelling value proposition via an RFBQ
- Ask for feedback from the prospect about the value of the solution

## **G** Gain a Commitment

- Ask the prospect for the predetermined commitment objective
- Recognize and deal with stalls and objections

## **Y** Yearn to Learn from Your Experience

- Replay the interaction and identify what went well and not so well
- Share feedback with the team about each participant's performance

Take a few minutes and reflect on the ENERGY process, and capture the key things in the process that influence success in gaining commitment from the customer.

# GAINING COMMITMENT SUCCESSFULLY

**Every step in the ENERGY process impacts whether or not you will be successful gaining a commitment from the customer.**

- Failure to plan for commitment results in the seller not asking for commitment
- If the relationship between the seller and the customer isn't large enough, the customer won't commit
- The customer needs to like the seller, or they will make an emotional decision not to buy
- If the seller doesn't ask the right questions to help the customer self-discover the solution, the customer is likely not going to commit
- Failure to ask questions to truly understand the customer's problem or goal, results in the wrong solution and call failure
- Failure to ask questions to discern the customer's budget or who the ultimate decision maker is often results in call failure
- When the seller doesn't listen and confirm their understanding of the customer's needs, gaining commitment is unlikely
- If the seller doesn't have a compelling value proposition they are likely to fail at gaining commitment
- If the customer isn't involved in the solutions step, they will be bored, and likely not buy
- If the seller doesn't ask for some form of commitment at the conclusion of each sales interaction, the sales process will likely come to a dead end and result in no commitment

# WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?

**Review the scenarios below, and identify where the seller likely went wrong in the ENERGY process. What did they do or fail to do that caused the customer to not commit?**

1. Joe with ABC LDC stopped in to see a residential developer in the area that he didn't have any relationship with, and when he got there he was actually able to connect. He introduced himself, and then immediately began telling the developer that he should plan to use natural gas for heating, cooling, water heating, and cooking. The developer told him thanks for stopping in and that he'd think about it. Joe left, but couldn't get the developer to meet with him again or to commit. Where did Joe go wrong?
2. Sue ran across a new strip mall just under construction, and decided to stop in and see if she could get the developer's name. A foreman at the construction site gave her the name of the commercial developer, and Sue set out to get a meeting set up with the developer. During the meeting Sue asked some questions about the tenants that the developer was targeting, and how the space would be used. She learned that the space was going to be used in a variety of ways – from office space to food service. Sue asked the developer if she could come back with a proposal to use natural gas in the strip mall. The developer agreed to another meeting, but when Sue showed up 15 minutes late, the developer wasn't available to meet with her. Where did Sue go wrong?
3. Jack learned of a new school that was going to be built in the area, and reached out to the architect that won the project to start a conversation about using natural gas. He got an appointment with the architect, but showed up 10 minutes late and failed to apologize. Jack didn't have time to do much preparation for the meeting, and he had never worked with a school before, but figured he could just wing it. After introducing himself, and making some small talk with the architect about football, he asked how the architect was planning on heating the school, and what plans they had for appliances in the kitchen area. The architect said that they hadn't gotten that far, and Jack said "well when you do, give me a call, and I'll tell you what to do." Jack shook hands, thanked the architect and left the meeting.

# PLANNING FOR COMMITMENT



**Begin with the end in mind. In sales, you must identify the outcome or goal that you want to achieve at the end of the interaction, that moves your sales process forward. Without a plan, you likely won't ask for any commitment.**

## ASK THE CUSTOMER FOR A COMMITMENT TO:



- Another meeting with other stakeholders
- A meeting to present ideas or solutions
- A tour of the development
- A formal presentation
- A meeting to gain information to do an energy analysis
- A signed agreement to proceed

## Be Prepared to Change Your Commitment Objective!

### ASSESSING YOUR COMMITMENT OBJECTIVE

1. Going into the discovery meeting you believe that you are meeting with the ultimate decision maker, and set a commitment objective to come back with a proposal. During the discovery, you learn that the person you're meeting with is only an influencer. How might you change your commitment objective in this situation?
2. You have a meeting with a residential builder to talk about natural gas applications in a new development. Your commitment objective is to come back with some ideas about opportunities to utilize natural gas, and the builder shares with you that he wants his team's input before any design work or ideas are discussed. How might you change your commitment objective in this situation?

# GAINING A COMMITMENT



**MORE THAN 60% OF ALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT INTERACTIONS RESULT IN NO COMMITMENT BECAUSE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONALS DON'T ASK FOR COMMITMENT!**

## WHY DON'T WE ASK?

## WE SHOULD ASK FOR COMMITMENT WHEN:

- We have established the \_\_\_\_\_ of our solution and are ready to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_
- We have built enough \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in our relationship that we can \_\_\_\_\_ the commitment and make a \_\_\_\_\_
- We are \_\_\_\_\_ the customer or prospect will \_\_\_\_\_
- We are \_\_\_\_\_ the sales interaction and need to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ with the customer

## HOW TO GAIN A COMMITMENT:

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# THE IMPACT OF STYLE ON COMMITMENT

Reflect on how you might ask customers of different behavioral styles for commitment after presenting your proposal. Capture your ideas below.

Style	Strategy
Dominance	
Influence	
Steadiness	
Conscientiousness	

# SKILL PRACTICE

Think about the case study that you've been working on, and look back at the solution you identified for the customer in the last module. Based on that solution, prepare to ask the customer for a commitment using the steps in the process.

Restate the problem that the customer is trying to solve or the outcome that they are trying to achieve	
Summarize your solution and your value proposition	
Quote the price	
Ask a tentative question like "how does this sound?" to determine if the customer is ready to commit. If the response is positive, ask "Would you like to go ahead with this?"	
If you get a negative response, then ask questions to uncover the customer's concerns.	



**Homework:** Practice asking for commitment with a partner back at your LDC.