



EXPRESS LANE

LEARNING ABOUT YOUR CUSTOMER IS THE KEY TO A FOUR-STEP PROCESS TO CLOSE – AND SPEED UP – YOUR SALES



BY TIM KINTZ

Today, time is everyone's most valuable commodity.

A common customer complaint is the car-buying process takes too long.

There are a lot of reasons people hate buying cars, but that one turns up over and over again.

No one wants to take five hours to buy a car – and there's no reason they should.

Every successful person has a repeatable process for everything he or she does. In my experience in car sales, I've found there are four steps needed to close a deal: reassure your customer, create mental ownership, transition the customer and secure a win-win transaction.

I call that process the Sales Quadrant, and it leads to a satisfying close you can reach with any customer in any deal.

QUADRANT 1: REASSURE THE CUSTOMER

Reassuring the customer happens before anything else – during the pre-demo trade walk.

Though there's always some compelling, often exciting, reason customers set out to buy a car, their emotions are also running high with anxiety and fear. They're worried about getting a bad deal or overspending, so their guard is up.

As salespeople, we need to reassure them that this experience is going to be different. And we can't just tell them – we have to show them.

Instead of going straight from the greeting at the curb to the lot like they expect, go to their vehicle and get to know them. That's their safety bubble and where they're more likely to open up to you.

Show them it's going to be all about them by letting them know you'll get them an appraisal on their vehicle, whether they buy a car from you or not.

Learn who they are and what they're looking for. Ask them what type of driving they do, what they love about their vehicle and what they don't like and want to change for the next one.

Ask them what kind of research they've done and what brought them to the lot.

Ask open-ended questions. It not only provides more information, it empowers customers as well.

They become the salesperson, telling you everything you need to know to sell them a car.

QUADRANT 2: CREATE MENTAL OWNERSHIP

As you move into the high-impact presentation, you want to create mental ownership in customers.

In the pre-demo trade walk, we're painting their life onto a blank canvas. We're walking around their car, collecting all of the information they can give us and piecing it together what their life is like.

Their guard should be lowered by that point and we'll find the right vehicle to present so we can begin painting it into the canvas of their life.

We've been trained to memorize all of the specs about our vehicles, but none of that matters if it doesn't matter to the customer. ➡

Everything about the presentation should connect with a need, want and hot button you learned in Quadrant 1.

Start with the least expensive vehicle in the inventory that fits their wants, needs and hot buttons the closest.

You can always go up, but if you start high and have to drop down, negotiation is going to be tough.

Create mental ownership by saying something like, “Remember telling me you needed more room in the back for your real estate signs and all the kids’ gear? Pop that latch and let me show you how much room is in there.”

The gross we make on the deal can be traced back to this step.

If the value climbs higher than the price during the presentation/demonstration, they’re going to want you to help them fit it into their budget, not the other way around.

QUADRANT 3: TRANSITION THE CUSTOMER

For this step, you want to close the sale or flush out objections.

The end of the demo is the highest emotional point of the sale.

Now, if you’re stiff and bowed up, or nervous and unsure, the customer is going to mirror your demeanor and make things awkward and difficult.

But assuming you’ve internalized and customized your closes, they’ll mirror your conversational and confident tone.

Once you’re back on the lot, you might say something like, “This seems like the perfect car for you. Park it over in the sold row and we’ll go inside and wrap it up.

“Are you guys going to both be on the title or will it just be one of you?”

If you did a good job in the other quadrants their excitement might be enough, and they’ll just answer you.

Did the close just work? Yes!

Of course, the customer might also let logic and fear kick in and say, “Whoa, pump the brakes...” and give you an objection.

Did the close just work? Again, yes!

The objective of a close is to either get a commitment on the car or flush out an objection. Both outcomes are helpful.

People are going to object. If we’ve done a great job in the first two quadrants, we can overcome those objections and get down to the sale.

QUADRANT 4: WIN-WIN TRANSACTION

You need to earn your customer’s trust and negotiate for gross.

Historically, we’ve been told speed kills on the lot.

That’s outdated.

Ultimately, slow kills with today’s buyer. Once we get a commitment from a customer and he or she is demonstrating confidence – and even a little trust – the clock is ticking.

Customers are as emotional as they’ll ever get at the end of Quadrant 2. As you move through Quadrant 3, logic starts to take over as they approach the negotiation.

They’re thinking about payments, reviews, all that research and getting a good deal.

Our job is to justify all of that. We have to make the numbers make sense.

When you pull from the information gathered during the pre-demo trade walk and build on all the value you created during the presentation/demonstration and the commitment you just got while closing, negotiation can actually be fun.

Working the numbers becomes a way to make that perfect vehicle fit into the customer’s budget.

Professional negotiators – which anyone can become – are creative. They’re working toward a win-win scenario that sets a foundation for every other car deal that will happen with that customer.

A good deal for the customer is one that feels good. When we make sure our process follows their natural path toward trust and work with their emotional and logical inclinations, we could make \$5,000 on the deal and they’ll still feel like they won.

Value always wins over price, which means a great sale is about creating a great experience while getting them in their ideal vehicle.

WRAP UP THE DEAL

In total, the four-step sales process should take a little more than an hour. While you might go a bit over, the days of five-hour car deals are gone.

The most important thing is if we build the value higher than the price in the first two quadrants (reassuring the customer and creating mental ownership) and secured a clear commitment in the third (transitioning the customer), negotiation will go a lot faster in the fourth (creating a win-win transaction).

By separating the commitment from the discussion around numbers, we can more easily avoid the slow grind that wears us all down. ■



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