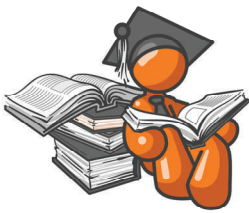


## A Report on the Worst Sales Problems in the World

As part of the on-going research conducted through the delivery of Tele-Sales and Field Sales training programmes across Europe, Timepower Ltd collects opinions from clients, delegates and readership of general business newsletters on the type and the frequency of problems they face.



With over 2000 responses during 2008 – 2009 from across the UK, Sweden, Germany, France and the Netherlands this is one of the most comprehensive pieces of research into the challenges faced by business today; across all industries and all organisational size.

The complete list of forty problems can be found in the appendix to this report or download from [Bobhayward.com](http://Bobhayward.com). Those sales problems selected most frequently were;

Frequency	Problem No	Description
12%	38	Tend to accept "think it over's", "get back to me's", and/or "we'll let you know's"
10.23%	17	Not asking the right kind of questions in the right way all the time
9.47%	16	Not getting through voice mail or gate keepers
7.20%	5	Can't turn around negative or resistant prospects
6.82%	34	The prospects say they have a better quote from a competitor
6.06%	11	Don't know when you are being lied to, stalled or put off or what to do about it.
5.30%	13	Fear of or ineffective at cold-calling
4.17%	31	Not well organised and do not manage time effectively
4.17%	37	Waste time making too many repeat and follow up calls
3.03%	2	Blowing the first seconds of contact

These 10 problems make up over 65% of all the problems selected in our research and it is highly likely that they are affecting your sales performance too...

As these issues are both high impact and high frequency it is vital that each company, each sales manager and ideally each sales person develop some ways to solve them. By doing so your sales results are likely to improve.

What are some of the best practice ideas others have discovered that can help with the worse five?

## The worst FIVE sales problem in the world?

### Problem 38 ~ Tending to accept too many "think it overs"



These are typical "put-offs" or "stalls" and may hide an actual "NO" or an objection.

1. **Concentrate on opening relationships** rather than purely closing sales, if you have developed a degree of trust and rapport by being "interested in them" and by asking good well thought out questions you will be in a better place to dig behind the "put-off" ~ without the rapport and trust they are less likely to allow you to probe further.
2. **Handle the Stall as an objection** ~ You'll recognise the most common form of a stall with these words: "We want to think it over." Or "I'm too busy to make a decision right now." There are many variations. The key to dealing with these objections is to recognise the customer's statement is a stall, so you know what to say.

This is perhaps the most common objection. It stands to reason, then, that the strategies you use in overcoming sales objections and countering Stalls are going to be a major factor in your success as a salesperson.

Whatever the cause for the stall, handling it isn't a science, it's an art. The art is in helping the customer see that you truly accept and understand their hesitation.

- Acknowledge that you heard them.
- Reassure them it is a valid response and you are OK with it.
- Ask questions, probe behind the stall, start a conversation, draw them out.
- Only once you have a real question or concern to handle can you make progress.
- Then BEFORE you answer the question or concern confirm there is nothing else preventing a sale.

### Problem 17 ~ Not asking the right kind of questions in the right way all the time

S.P.I.N.	C.I.B.B.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Situation</li> <li>• Problem</li> <li>• Issues</li> <li>• Needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current situation</li> <li>• Ideal situation</li> <li>• Barriers to progress</li> <li>• Buying Criteria</li> </ul>

Within each of those areas develop

- An opening question ~ to draw the customer into that area and get them talking
- A series of open questions to probe further after the first answer

Example ~ exploring current supplier arrangements as a Probe Area

- What are your current arrangements with regard to architectural hardware? [answer]
- Sure it makes sense to have regular suppliers, let me ask you; What are some of the important aspects about your current arrangements?
- [answer containing three qualities]
- OK, I can understand why you mentioned those; Which of those three are the most important to you? [answer]
- What makes that aspect so important to you? [answer]
- Yes, the team at XYZ mention that also; how does that help with the type of projects you are currently working on? [answer]
- Really..?
- So I guess if I'm ever to do business with you, I'd have to ensure you were 100% comfortable that Your Company Name's service is up to those same high standards? [ ?yes]

Develop a consistent structured and thorough approach to each client or prospect conversation, ensure you learn so much about them and their world and their situation as well as their needs that proposing an ideal solution later becomes very natural and very accurate. Be insatiably curious.

## **Problem 16 ~ Not getting through voice mail or gate keepers**

### **Gate-keepers first**

Treat gate-keepers just like the main target you wish to speak to, they can either be a massive help to you or an insurmountable barrier. Gate-keeper are taught to ask three to five questions so as the sales person you need to be fully prepared with those answers. The three questions are

1. Who is calling?
2. What company are you from? And the killer question
3. What is it in reference to?

A possible 4<sup>th</sup> is ~ Is he/she expecting your call and the last is ~ "are you a current supplier?"

Try this: Call and answer their questions in "one sentence"

*Hello, this is Bob Hayward from XYZ, I am calling with reference to some correspondence between our two companies. Is Mr Surname in?*

**Remember** to ask ~ Is Mr Surname in? If he is they "think yes" and are far more likely to put you straight through.

## **Voicemail**

Keep your voicemail to between 9 and 40 seconds ~ aim for 20 seconds  
State a very good reason, phrased in their self interest (a value proposition or general benefit statement), for them to return your call.

*"Hello, Mr Woods. You had previously requested information on improving the effectiveness of the maintenance equipment for your greens. If you want to understand how Client Name I reduced their overall maintenance costs while improving the playing surfaces and you have an interest in exploring some options that have worked for others, please call. This is Bob Hayward at XYZ, 0700 393 2642, that's 07 00 39 32 64 2." Hang up.*

**Remember** it might take 9 attempts before anyone calls you back  
Use a planned but irregular pattern of follow up contact attempts  
Change to channel your use in the contact attempts, fax, letter, email, phone calls

## **Problem 5 ~ Can't turn around negative or resistant prospects**

### **Handling the negative or resistant prospect**

Most sales cycles involve resistant from the prospect as part of the process.

The common mistake is TO OVERREACT. We do this because these negative reactions are part of a serious attempt by the prospect to ensure she/he isn't about to make decision".

### **Profile of the over-reaction:**

In your mind your self-talk starts - "oh, oh - looks like this one is going south." ~ Shucks, I thought I had it!" ~ "Oh now, he hates it!"

This triggers a physiological reaction - Fallen face, slumped posture, tightness in voice, desperation in tone and a defensive reaction. Your fight or flight mechanism kicks in.

You start talking too much, defending your position against the perceived threat. You telegraph lack of confidence. You show more concern for defending your point of view than for understanding their point of view.  
It may be the beginning of the end.



## What to do instead:

Remember, a prospect's number one fear about "sales people" is that "they won't understand me and my world." Other sales people caused this valid concern - and objections are the prospect's only defensive mechanism. Patients are nervous before surgery, too...

### ATTITUDE:

- You can't lose what you don't have. Only the prospect can handle their negativity or resistance, you are only here to help them go through a buying process.
- Be curious - **NEVER** defensive.
- Resistance can be a natural part of what the other person is going through – it can be a good sign, not a bad sign.
- I'm prepared. I've handled these reactions like this before, and I'll handle them now.
- Ask your self - "Why do I have a panic response to this reaction?" It may be an old tape running in your head that needs to be rewritten.

### BEHAVIOUR:

- Look for trends and patterns. Ask yourself, 'What might I be doing that causes this reaction. For reoccurring negative reactions, take time to prepare an effective response strategy. Ask others to help.
- Practice your responses and track results using new approaches.
- NEXT - Have a lot of prospects, so the loss of this one is no big deal.

### TECHNIQUE:

Be in control,  
Say to yourself - 'She/he is asking for help, and I can help.'  
Smile, stay calm, and be empathetic.

### Seek first to understand...

Validate or acknowledge (it's key to know the difference) their position.  
Validate means to acknowledge the correctness of their position.  
Acknowledge means, you hear and recognize their view, but don't necessarily agree.

Clarify – ask them some more questions until you're sure you understand them.  
Ask them how they would resolve the issue.

### ...then to be understood.

1. Take them back to their pain - balance it against the problem.
2. Discuss alternatives.
3. Ask evaluative questions designed to get a "yes" response.

## Use the law of Physics

Newton's third law is: For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.

Use this law to turn the prospect around. The more "positive" you are maybe the more "negative" they have to be ~ equal and opposite.

### Reverse this by going negative yourself.

*"I know you're incredibly busy and I am just reflecting on our conversation. I'm enthusiastic about working with you, and would love to be a part of your supplier team, if it makes sense to you. It doesn't feel like this conversation is going in the right direction for that to happen and I'm wondering what the reason is. Maybe..."*

- 1. I've made you uncomfortable in our meeting, and you are too nice to tell me I've blown the chance to work with you.*
- 2. The problems we've discussed before (X ~ Y & Z) have all gone away.*
- 3. I've completely misunderstood you and you are rightly frustrated with me.*

*Or it may be something else I haven't thought of. Would you mind letting me know which it is?"*

### Problem 34 ~ The prospect has a better quote...

This is a price objection and needs to be handled as with care as with any objection.

### How to Eliminate Price Objections

The real key to solving objections is to work at eliminating them altogether. Virtually every person in sales experiences price objections. Unfortunately, the majority of sales people take the wrong approach and try to box customers into a corner by asking questions such as:

- *"If I can do that price do we have deal?"*
- *"Is that the only thing holding back?"*
- *"What do I need to do to earn your business?"*
- *"If I can offer a solution would you be willing to buy today?"*

These are nothing more than manipulative sales tactics that, ultimately, make a customer feel uncomfortable and coerced into buying the product or service.

The real key to solving objections is to work at eliminating them altogether. You can accomplish this by investing more time qualifying your customer. Salespeople who ask more questions generally face fewer objections during the selling process. The reason is simple...they uncover potential objections early in the sales cycle. Questions that will help you uncover potential objections include:

***“Who else is involved in this decision?”***

The purpose of this question is to establish who else has input in the decision making process. If someone else has influence on the final decision you may end up spinning your wheels trying to close the sale without her present.

***“What time frame are you working with?”***

This question is much more effective than asking, “When were you looking to buy?” which can put people on the defensive.

***“Who else are you talking to?”***

This helps you understand what other vendors or companies are bidding on the project. This can assist you in differentiating yourself from your competitors.

***“What was your experience with...?”***

Based on the customer’s previous experience(s) you can now position your product or service to exceed their experience at your competitor.

***“What budget constraints are you working with?”***

Well if there is a budget, lets find out what it is

These questions will draw out information from your customer. This information then allows you to position your product or service in a manner that best suits the customer’s needs and wants.

Open the relationship ~ get real as early as possible and closing in not an issue because your solution will be a perfect match on all the key parameters. The alternative is trying to hit a target you can not see...

Well, that concludes our initial look at the worst five sales problems; if you'd like to read more then please email me at [bob.hayward@timepower.co.uk](mailto:bob.hayward@timepower.co.uk) or visit one of our business to business websites for further downloads.

[www.bobhayward.com](http://www.bobhayward.com)

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[www.opcuk.com](http://www.opcuk.com)

Regards

Bob Hayward  
Managing Director



## Top 40 Sales Problems

1. Always want to be liked by prospects
2. Blowing the first seconds of contact
3. Blowing the sales presentation after a good start
4. Can't control long buying cycles
5. Can't turn around negative or resistant prospects
6. Can't deal with distractions
7. Not knowing when or how to close a sale
8. Don't get enough referrals and introductions
9. Don't have a strategic process to deal with multiple decision-makers with varied interests and concerns
10. Don't have a tracking system that shows progress towards reaching sales goals
11. Don't know when you are being lied to, stalled or put off, or what to do about it
12. Unsure of what has to happen and when in a sales process
13. Fear of or ineffective at cold-calling
14. Fear of rejection
15. Not gaining a prospect's trust
16. Not getting through voicemail or gatekeepers
17. Not asking the right kind of questions in the right way all the time
18. Hiring the wrong sales people
19. Inaccurate forecasting
20. Not resolving inappropriate contact level/type within a prospect
21. Little sharing of intellectual capital across your team or network
22. Not using a structured, sound sales process that mirrors the buying cycle
23. Not understanding the other person's personal or company values
24. Not comfortable getting prospects to talk about money, budget and their buying process
25. Not doing your homework
26. Not knowing your prospect's "hot button"
27. Not listening
28. Insufficient warm in-bound leads
29. Not qualifying prospects in/out
30. Not using customer endorsements
31. Not well organised and don't manage time effectively
32. Overselling
33. Psychological attachment to deals
34. The prospects say they have a better quote from a competitor
35. Not effective at answering a prospect's concerns, questions or objections
36. Unable to articulate your USP or value proposition
37. Waste time making too many repeat and follow up calls
38. Tend to accept "think it over's", "get back to me's", and/or "we'll let you know's"
39. Can't always get prospects to reveal their reasons as to why they would not buy
40. Inconsistent motivation and performance