

# Lessons from the gym

Ashley Latter tells of a personal experience that illustrates the importance of 'closing the deal'

In delivering my Ethical Sales Programme to over 1,000 dentists, I find that the second biggest mistake that dentists make is not discussing the treatment plan. In other words, they don't ask for commitment from the patient. The consolation news is that it is still one of the biggest challenges most sales people find in most industries. A few weeks ago, I visited a new health club that opened up round the corner from where I live. The following is

almost a word-for-word transcript of what happened in the conversation. We had just spent over 10 minutes together, where I was shown around the gym and then we went back into the sales office. See if you can find the mistakes - answers on a postcard...

**Staff member:** What do you think?

**Ashley Latter:** Absolutely brilliant and it is much better than my present gym.

**SM:** Let me go through the membership prices for you.

**AL:** No it's for my wife, two kids and me. We would like a membership for four.

**SM:** OK, is your wife a member of a health club?

**AL:** Yes

**SM:** Then you do not need to pay the joining fee - that is free. So you will save around £150 each.

**AL:** Fantastic, that is a really good gesture.

**SM:** So in that case the membership is around £75.00 per month for the four of you.

**AL:** That's good value. If paid by cheque all at once, do I get a discount? (I had my chequebook in my hand.)

**SM:** Yes, you will save two monthly standing order payments.

**AL:** That is really good value and I think my family would love it here and the kids would love the pool.

**SM:** Here are the forms, why don't you go away and chat to your wife and think about it.

**AL:** Yes, I will do that.

That's exactly what I did. I walked away and never joined. At first my wife

was keen, but has since started to walk with a group of friends and is really enjoying it and I have stayed with the gymnasium where I have been a member for over 12 years.

She missed out on a sale of over £700. If she did that, say, five times a week on an average sale of, say, £500 and she works for 45 weeks a year, the gymnasium is losing over £50,000 worth of business. That is straight off the bottom line, bearing in mind the costs of running the health club are the same. The funny thing was that if she would have asked me, I am about 90% certain I would have said yes and it would have been a nice anniversary present for my wife.

So why do most sales people find it challenging to close the business? It can be several reasons. These include:

- Lack of confidence
- Don't know how to ask



# PRACTICE ORGANISATION



The reasons for a sales failure in a gym are the same as in a dental surgery

- They feel as if they are putting pressure on the other person
- They don't want to come across as a 'used car dealer'

From the above script there are a few things to review.

Listen carefully for buying signals. Buying signals are things people do, or say to indicate that they are ready to buy. The chequebook in my hand is a non-verbal buying signal. In the above script there are a few verbal buying

signals such as:

- 'Fantastic'

- 'That's good value'
- 'If I pay all at once, do I get a discount?'

These are indications that the customer is interested in buying and therefore you should listen very carefully to these, as they are real indicators. Once you hear these, you must close the loop and gain patient commitment.

Another tool you can use is the **evaluative question**. For example, if you have built relationships, presented your solution on the patient's

agenda, then you ask the following questions:

- How does this sound?
- Is this the type of look you would like?
- Do you fully understand what I have been talking about?

If they say 'yes' and they seem happy enough, then you could then ask for patient commitment.

Here are a few techniques that will help you gain this commitment

## 1 ASK FOR UPTAKE OF THE TREATMENT PLAN

This is the simplest way of tying the whole process together. Examples of this would be:

- 'Do you want to proceed with the treatment?'
- 'When would you like to start the treatment?'

## 2 GIVE ALTERNATIVES

If you find asking the business still a challenge then you could use the 'Alternative Method'. This is when you give the patient a

choice to choose from. Examples of this would be

- 'Would you like to start the treatment now, or next week?'
- 'Would you like it in silver or gold?'
- 'Would you like to pay cash or by credit card?'

By choosing this method the patient has to choose one or the other and therefore if they choose one you know they are going ahead.

## 3 NEXT STEP FORWARD

This reads exactly as says in the title it is what ever the next step in the process. Examples of these are:

- 'All we need to do now is go to reception and book the dates in the diary?'
- 'All we need to do now is take an X-ray, please come over this way'

## 4 OPPORTUNITY METHOD

The opportunity method is a window of opportunity that you offer the patient. Let me give you some examples

- 'If you agree today, then I can have your teeth looking white and super for your wedding in two weeks'
- 'I have some good news for you. I have had a cancellation, therefore I can get you in for treatment next Tuesday. How does this sound?'

## CONCLUSION

There are four methods that you can use. There are plenty of books that will give you hundreds of different ways, but I only use these four in my programme. Any of these will do fine, you just choose on that suits you.

So there you have a few examples just to ensure that you have closed the loop and gained the patient commitment. Please do not forget to gain commitment and ensure that you ensure the patient has commitment to proceed. ●



Ashley Latter is the 'selling coach'. Over 1,000 dentists, hygienists and nurses have taken part in his Ethical Sales Programme. For details of his forthcoming schedule and other information, please visit [www.thesellingcoach.co.uk](http://www.thesellingcoach.co.uk) or email [ashley@thesellingcoach.com](mailto:ashley@thesellingcoach.com)