

- Don't know how to ask;
 - They feel as if they are putting pressure on the other person;
 - Don't want to come across as a 'car sales person'.
- 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 so 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.

Evaluative question

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 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 ask for patient commitment.

Here are a few techniques that will help you gain commitment

1. Ask for the 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 it?
2. Give alternatives. If you find asking for the business still

a challenge then you could use an alternative method. This gives the patient a choice. 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 if they choose one you know they are going ahead.

3. Next step forward. This is whatever is 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' or 'Mrs Patient, all we need to do now is take an X-ray. Please come over this way.'

4. Opportunity method. This 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,' or 'I have some good news for you. I have had a cancellation so I can get you in for treatment next Tuesday. How does this sound?'

These are four methods 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. ■

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