



# When Do You Lose Your Prospect? At the End of Your Presentation—or at the Beginning?

**By Troy Dooly**

A few weeks ago, one of our field leaders called and said, “I lost a prospect today, he signed with another leader in our company. I just don’t understand why. I represent the same company, I contacted him first, I did everything my upline sponsor had taught me. I made a great presentation. I created rapport with my prospect. I thought he was all but closed. Yet, when I left follow-up voicemails and sent follow-up e-mails, he never returned contact. And when I finally reached him, he told me, ‘I’ve decided to think about this for awhile longer, like, indefinitely.’ Ouch! Where’d I go wrong?”

“Well,” I suggested, “you probably lost this prospect from the very beginning of your presentation.” “Why do you think that?” he asked. “Because you didn’t change his paradigm of suspicion mentality so you could determine the true needs your prospect’s life.”

Human nature says, “This is too good to be true, I’ll probably fail,” or, “This is just another get-rich scheme.” Most networkers lose the prospect right at the beginning by failing to overcome one of these stereotypes. We never get close to determining the bottom-line needs of our prospect’s situation.

We are taught to build rapport with our prospects and ask questions such techniques as the F.O.R.M. method. The down side of this style of training is that these are calculated ploys aimed at manipulating the prospect into an action we determine, rather than an action the prospect determines he needs to make to better his life. As professional networkers, *we must build trust* rather than merely rapport. We need to reach the point of trust where, when we ask prospects questions, they realize we are asking because we truly care about their welfare and are not just trying to manipulate them into doing something they don’t want to do.

Trust doesn’t simply happen by itself. You first have to move the prospect from the place of suspicion, where they suspect your main purpose is a self-serving one (that is, to make them do something they really don’t want to do). Haven’t we all been through this same thing when salespeople have targeted us? We believe that “closing the sale,” no matter what the cost, is the main focus for all salespeople.

How many times have you protected yourself by carefully avoiding statements such as, “I’m definitely interested,” or “I’m considering your solution,” whether you mean them or not. Why would you expect any different from your own prospects?

In “high-trust winning,” it’s crucial to dispel the salesperson stereotype right at the start. How? It takes two steps:

### **1) Change Your Paradigm to a High-Trust Wining Mindset.**

Instead of a goal (to close the sale), focus on allowing an open, honest discussion that will let you and your prospects determine whether you're a good match.

### **2) Adopt a High-Trust Winning Behavior.**

From the moment you meet a prospect, everything you say and do must demonstrate that you're not a "salesperson." If you've done the inner work of adopting the high-trust winning mindset, you'll communicate the integrity of that stance to your prospects.

Here are some high-trust winning principles for initial meetings and phone calls with prospects:

- Your language, words, tone of voice and demeanor should always convey respect and humility.
- If the need arises, you can say, "I don't believe in 'closing' people or in being associated with the negative image of a salesperson in any way."
- Ask your prospects, "Are you okay with a 'non-salesy' approach?" (You'll be surprised by how welcoming they are of someone who doesn't play sales games.)
- Use phrases like, "Would you be open to exploring..." "I don't want to assume that I can help you..." or "How can I help you feel comfortable that I don't have a hidden agenda here—that I just want to have an open discussion about your needs so we can determine if we have a fit?"

When your prospects' fear starts to subside and they realize you're not going to try to maneuver or control them, they'll start to trust you and your relationship will move from one of suspicion to one of mutual respect. This leads to open communication. They won't feel they have to evade you by making false statements about how interested they are.

Now they'll feel more comfortable explaining their true needs, budget, decision-making process and so forth.

Now you can begin sharing information about your product or service. Your only goal is to see if there is an honest opportunity for both of you to enter into a long-term business relationship.

Now you're ready to start asking some important questions, with the purpose of gaining a better understanding your prospects' needs. You remain respectful and humble, your manner is polite and questioning, and you continue to make the effort to see things from your prospects' perspective.

Finally, when your conversation nears its natural conclusion, avoid statements like, "Let's set up a next step." That only reintroduces sales pressure. Instead, suggest, "Where do you think should we go from here?"

Now you can see why so many of us probably lose our sale right at the beginning: because we failed to dispel the salesperson stereotype, and our follow-up calls only add to the problem. The high-trust winning mindset and the behaviors that are in harmony with it make it easy to dispel that stereotype.