

The Barf Factor

During a recent presentation we were discussing the importance of being able to deliver a clear, concise message when you first meet with a prospect and we agreed that a quick, thirty second introduction would be an effective approach. A participant challenged me, saying that an introduction of this nature sounded canned and rehearsed. As he recited his opening message, I fully agreed with him—it did sound canned. Not to mention extremely difficult to understand.

Unfortunately, he made one of the fatal mistakes that many sales people make when they first introduce themselves to a potential customer or client. The mistake is to barf on them. Not figuratively of course. But verbally.

Too many sales people mistakenly believe that they should open their conversation with a background and history of their company. Or, a complete description of their products, services, or solutions. It seems like they can't control what comes out of their mouth once they open it. They puke. They barf. They spew all over themselves.

A great opening message or introduction follows a few key criteria.

- It focuses on the other person.
- It conveys how you help your clients and customers.
- It is easy to understand.
- It does not contain an excess of adverbs or adjectives.
- It intrigues the other person.
- It must be delivered in a conversational tone.

Most sales people start talking about their products or services instead of focusing their attention on the customer. The best way to do this is to state the benefit of your product or service and how it relates to your customer. Here is an example,

“Mr. Adams, I'm Pat from Geeks R Us. We specialize in helping small businesses like yours fix computer problems. The reason I'm calling is to see if you ever have experienced computer problems, and if so, how they have affected your business.”

Notice that this introduction briefly describes the sales person's business while clearly describing the problems they solve. It is brief—forty-two words in total—and it takes less than fifteen seconds to state. That means it is very easy to understand.

Your introduction or opening should be scripted. However, one of the challenges of creating a script is that it must sound like something you would actually say. I don't know about you, but most of the people I know don't use many descriptive words when they speak. And, very few people write the same way they speak. The individual in my workshop had memorized a written statement that

described the services he provided. He wrote something that he thought looked good on paper but it ended up sounding forced and stilted when it was spoken. Part of this was the number of adjectives and descriptive words he used. Limit your use of descriptive words. The shorter and more brief, the better.

While I believe in the use of scripts, they cannot and must not, sound like a script when you recite it. Your opening or introduction **MUST** be delivered in a conversational tone if you want it to achieve the intended results.

Consider the difference between a highly trained actor and a typical telemarketer who calls you in the evening. The actor portrays the emotion and feeling while the telemarketing simply reads the words. This means that you need to practise reciting your opening or introduction so it sounds natural. Relaxed. Conversational. If you're not sure how your message sounds, ask someone you trust to evaluate it for you.

The barf factor also applies when you are delivering a presentation about your products and services. Instead of talking without taking a breath during the presentation of your product, pause after a few moments and make sure that your customer is still following you **AND** paying attention. It never ceases to amaze me how often a sales person actually speeds up when they notice that their customer is tuning out or no longer paying attention. As if that's going to keep the other person's attention!

Lastly, be careful not to barf on your customer when he or she expresses an objection. It is far more effective to empathize with the customer and check to make sure that you fully understand their concern **BEFORE** you present a solution. I have watched hundreds, if not thousands, of sales people in my workshops barf on their customer as they try to overcome objections. They ramble on and on trying to convince the customer why they should make a buying decision instead of making one key point and checking to see if that makes sense to the customer.

Barfing shows a lack of control. I mean, you can't usually control this bodily function when you are sick. And when you barf on someone during a sales conversation, it shows the same lack of control. Demonstrate your superior skill and ability by controlling what you say and how you say it.

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