

Close That Sale With A Toy

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We never really grow up. We learn how to behave in a controlled way in front of grownups, but the child in us is always ready to come back to the surface. That's why it is often possible for you to **Close That Sale With A Toy**.

The sales quarter is coming to a close in a week. You need one more deal to push you over quota, and your best prospect is sitting on your proposal. After you call him for the third time, your prospect assures you he has all the information he needs and will make his decision shortly. It's been three days, and you haven't heard a thing. So what do you do next? Well, of course, you send your prospect a Magic 8 ball.

Let's face it: Many adults love toys as much as kids do. If you have ever been to a trade show, you undoubtedly have witnessed distinguished professionals elbowing each other just to obtain a free stress ball from some vendor's booth. As they walk away with a new toy in hand, the grins on their faces say, "I've got a new toy, I've got a new toy." These adults will claim the toy is for their children, yet the toy inevitably ends up on their own desks.

The fact is that toys simply bring happiness to people of all ages. This happiness is disarming, and disarmed adults are more open to receiving your message. If you are not using toys to close deals, you may not be closing enough.

How Office Toys Help You Sell

You may be all too familiar with the following situation: Your prospect has been sitting on the fence for weeks, maybe months. You dread having to tell your manager that you don't have any good news to report on the big deal. After narrowly avoiding your manager in the hallway, you send the prospect another e-mail with standard questions like "Are there any other questions I can answer for you?" or "What would it take for you to move forward?" If you have been in the sales game for a while, you already know what the results of your e-mail will be: The prospect will pick up on your urgency and ask for more concessions in the deal, usually a lower price. He might begin to lose respect for you at this point because he is reminded that you are motivated by a quota, not by solving his problem.

Now imagine that this same prospect receives a Magnetic Sculpture with your company's logo on it. (A Magnetic Sculpture is a toy with many small metal pieces that can be formed into endless sculptural combinations on a magnetized base.) Attached is a card with a simple note: "I thought you might need

something to help you take a break from your busy day. Enjoy." Within minutes of receiving the toy, the prospect begins to think any of the following thoughts:

- "This rep is cool. I thought she would be bugging me every day, asking for the signed paperwork. Instead, she sends me a toy? I'm sitting on a big proposal, and she uses a toy (which I do love) to push me over the edge. That is clever, and I want to continue working with this rep and her company."
- "I really need to call that sales rep to thank her and let her know where the deal stands. I should probably even admit that I am waiting for my boss' approval to sign the deal."
- "I am important enough for her to spend the money and make the effort. This company is taking my business seriously."
- "Look at all of my colleagues admiring my new toy. *Their* vendors don't take them seriously enough to give them toys."
- "I feel much more comfortable talking with these folks now. I will call this afternoon to schedule an appointment to finalize the deal."

As your prospect plays with his new desk toy, positive thoughts continue to run through his head for hours, days and weeks. You have just gained your prospect's mindshare. You now have him constantly thinking about you, your company and your proposal in a positive light.

Choosing A Desk Toy

At this point, you may be asking yourself, "Why send desk toys instead of another type of gift?" The answer is that you are trying to separate yourself from your competition. Your competition sends flowers (which die), pens (which run out of ink or mysteriously disappear) and chocolate (which gets eaten). The great thing about giving toys is the endless number of possibilities available.

The trick is to obtain something original, as most of your prospects have enough mouse pads and coffee mugs to last a lifetime. Unique forms of foam stress relievers are always a big hit. They can be imprinted with your company logo and come in all sorts of unusual styles like high-tech equipment, fruits and vegetables, body parts and animals. Office sports toys are another popular theme. Try a desktop dart board, mini pool, air hockey table game or a miniature basketball hoop. Whichever toy you choose, whether imprinted with your company logo or not, it's the playing that's important.

As with most things, it is a good idea to exercise some judgment when using the office toy strategy. If you are convinced your prospect wouldn't appreciate a free toy, then don't send one. Always be sure to select a gift that best matches your prospect's personality.

I've often heard sales referred to as "the art of getting people to do what they usually wouldn't." Don't you agree that getting a hard-nosed prospect to play with toys during business hours gives you a psychological advantage? Even if you lose the pending deal, your prospect will continue to play with the toy and will think of you and your company. Giving a desk toy is a great way to ensure that your biggest clients and prospects think of you in a positive fashion on a daily basis.

So if you believe we are all kids at heart, consider selling to the kids in your territory. Keep some office toys in your sales bag, and you will sell more and have more fun doing it.

*Bill Ross is the co-founder and CEO of Office Playground, the world's leading source for office toys. After several years in the high-tech sales and marketing environment, Bill recognized the need in America's intense business climate for more toys and more fun, thus Office Playground was born.
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