

Deal Killers

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Choices kill more sales than they create. When customers have too many choices, the decision becomes more difficult. The more difficult the decision, the longer it takes. The longer the decision takes, the more likely it will be negative.

In 28 years of consulting, I've witnessed more companies improve sales and profits by specializing and reducing their choices than by doing the reverse. Catalog companies, big boxes and organizations without direct sales forces are the likely exceptions.

I've attended countless meetings listening to sales reps complain about losing business due to a lack of choices: insufficient colors or sizes, too few lines or models, limited terms, etc.

Sadly, the belief that you'll boost sales with more choices is destructive; most sales reps are just seeking an easier way to sell. They don't understand that easier doesn't necessarily equate to better.

Ironically, if increasing sales has more to do with the customer's choices than your sales ability, you could become dispensable.

The hard truth is that you'll probably lose some business due to a lack of choices yet, you'll lose many more sales by having too many choices. Sales reps will often challenge this principle because it doesn't make sense to them.

Many sales and marketing truths don't make sense. That's why "common sense" cannot rule marketing decisions; people buy more with emotion than they do with logic. Otherwise, how do you explain why people

buy toupees, cigarettes or chia pets? Here are seven critical issues that are probably more important to you and your customers than the number of choices.

TRUST. When people believe you'll always tell the truth and will always look out for their best interests, they'll be willing to settle on other issues. Recommend choices only after you have all the facts that affect their results.

CREDIBILITY. When people believe you understand them and their situation, they'll allow you to guide their choices. Before you recommend any choice, make sure you learn how and why all their alternatives affect them. Customers will not provide this information without your asking.

URGENCY. Time is usually critical to value. The speed at which you can deliver some element of service regularly outweighs a "preferred" but non-essential choice.

DIFFERENTIATION. You can develop a unique position through your products or services although your competition probably has some clear uniqueness too. The most impactful way to differentiate is through the sales rep. The secret is to create a unique position by being the service rather than just selling the service.

RECIPROCITY. Do as much as possible for your customers to make them feel like they owe you the business. Don't do it to take advantage of them; do it to make you and your company the only acceptable choice.

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SIMPLICITY. Make it easy for your customers by applying your knowledge of the situation to narrow their alternatives before you recommend a solution.

ISOLATION. Remove every one of your customer's alternatives but yours using their wants, needs and values, before making your presentation.



David Yoho provides systems and customized education that helps organizations outthink, outsell, outmaneuver and outnegotiate their competition without sacrificing profit or integrity.

He's delivered thousands of speeches and seminars to executives, managers, salespeople and business owners on negotiation, sales, management and database marketing.

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