The Perfect Close:
The Secret To Closing Sales

The Best-Selling Practices & Techniques For Closing The Deal

James Muir

Best Practice International

THE PERFECT CLOSE
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By JAMES MUIR

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Dedication

To Mahan Khalsa - For teaching me that intent counts more than technique.

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Free Additional Resources

It was impossible to include everything in the book and still keep it to a manageable size. So I've created a place for you where you can download free resources that will help you further your sales journey.

You can download these resources at PureMuir.com/resources . There you will find illustrations of The Perfect Close, special reports, mind maps, checklists, forms for research and planning meetings, sample agendas, guides to make some of the exercises in the book easier and more.

I will continue to add to these resources as time goes on. I hope you find them valuable as you continue to expand your skills and knowledge.

Why I Wrote This Book

Early in my sales career I struggled with closing because I came from the services part of the business where we delivered the services that clients were buying. During this time I never appreciated all the challenges with being in sales because the process by which prospects became clients was hidden to me.

Eventually, I became a technical resource to help the sales force during their presentations. This position provided me a ringside seat to observe all of the sales processes and scenarios involved in interacting with prospective clients. It was a big eye opener for me. I came to really admire the sellers. Great salespeople are amazing. They are creators—generating something out of nothing. They are the key catalyst for positive change for not only their customers but also the companies for which they work. They are the spark that makes everything happen. They are both openers and closers.

I remember thinking how hard it looked. I was grateful for not having to do those functions and recall saying to myself, "I hope I never have to do that."

Sure enough, circumstances changed in a way that required I become a field sales person. I was faced front and center with performing those same functions I had hoped I'd never have to do. Despite my anxiety I had a great deal of enthusiasm. Unfortunately I didn't know where to channel my energy or where to go to learn what I didn't know. I developed an appreciation for new and inexperienced salespeople because that's exactly what I was—new and inexperienced.

In my circle of newbie salespeople, I struggled. I had no models to emulate. I had no training I could go through; no immediate resources I could tap. So, I turned to books.

For many years, I read every sales training book I could find. The books were helpful—some more than others—and I became an expert on one technique and then another. My tenacity and education paid off as I began to receive larger and larger commission checks. Yet, for me, something was missing. Regardless of all the time and effort I'd invested in my career, I still wasn't completely comfortable with my process.

After many years of considerable success in field sales I was asked to manage. As a sales manager, I worked with various professionals (some in field sales, some not). Many of these folks were top-tier professionals in their given domains who would be called upon to assist others in a selling effort (like I did early in my career). And sometimes, despite not being in sales, they would be called upon to go in solo to support the sales effort. Almost all of these professionals at one time or another confessed to me that they just didn't know what to say or do at the end of a call or meeting in order to "close the sale." They admitted that they found closing uncomfortable and the least favorite part of their job.

The lion's share of these individuals admitted that rather than moving the process forward with intention, they would just keep talking or presenting until they ran out of time—praying that their prospects would ask *them* for the business. I found this to be a common challenge with my field reps, as well.

Their frustration resonated with me because this was my exact experience. Ironically, sometimes it worked. My clients would be so "sold" (over-sold really) that they would literally interrupt me (because time

was running short) and proceed to close me on the next step. Let me illustrate with an example from earlier in my career.

Because I came from the service side of the business, one of the first things I did as a new sales person was to diagram all the steps that I expected a customer to go through when evaluating solutions. There were twelve steps and next to each I indicated whether it was the customer's responsibility or my responsibility. I turned this into a form that I shared with my prospects during discovery (yeah, you just figured out how anal-retentive I was back then).

While presenting to one particular business I found things were going very well. Rapport, need, and understanding of how the solution would benefit them were all present. I could tell the key decision maker and his staff were on board. Yet, in my exuberance I didn't stop selling and close. I just kept right on going. It's crazy because I could see they were ready. Nevertheless, I found myself launching into even more details of my solution.

Finally, as our time together crept past two hours, the top executive interrupted me mid-sentence, "James!" Rotating and sliding my 12-step form toward me, he pointed to a box near the bottom where I'd typed "Deliver Agreement," and he said, "I'm right here in your process."

Embarrassed and red faced, I apologized, and then we discussed the agreement.

At the end of our conversation he told me, "At first I was wondering when you would ask me to buy. Then I realized that you weren't going to. You were never going to stop. I HAD to interrupt you. We were already over time. Not everyone would do that, you know."

I found myself reflecting on this over and over again. "Why didn't I ask?" I thought. Why did I keep going when I knew the time was right? In the end I determined that it was because I was uncomfortable and didn't know the right words to say. This introspection of my discomfort in closing the sale led my curious mind to studying the psychology and physiology (the science) involved in both asking for and committing others to a final decision. The result of this exploration is *The Perfect Close*, the book you now hold in your hands.

Why did I write this book? I wrote it for all the sales and service professionals who are like I was—lacking a clear and simple way to bring sales to closure. I want you to enjoy the same success and enjoyment that I experienced once I discovered that there IS a natural way to ask for commitment that is superior to the standard techniques out there. You don't have to change your personality or become someone you're not, and it's flexible enough to use at every given stage. It eliminated all of the stress, tension, and uncertainty I felt when it came time to close. It's a way of asking that made my prospective clients see me as both a facilitator and consultant.

Certainly, there is more to successful selling than just closing, however, for those struggling to find a clear and simple way to ask for commitment, this book may be the single most-valuable learning activity you can do for yourself. If you are simply ready to hone your selling game and take it to the next level, you now have in your hands the best practice for closing and advancing the sale.

If you invest the short amount of time it takes to learn this clear and simple method, you will dramatically improve your sales results and make all of your interactions profoundly more enjoyable.

It is my hope that you will achieve the same level of success and happiness that knowing these things has afforded me.

Introduction

Did you know there is a method to closing that is nearly always successful (in the 95% range), is zero pressure for you and your client, and involves just two questions? It's true. The book you have in your hands outlines the method. Even better, you can learn it in as little as five minutes.

It doesn't require that you change your personality or become someone you're not, and it's flexible enough to use on every kind of sale at every given stage.

It eliminates all of the stress and tension that some professionals feel when it comes to asking for commitments, and because it's facilitative, it completely eliminates the negative connotation many people associate with sales.

It makes clients feel more educated, in control, and causes them to see you as a facilitator and consultant.

I call it *The Perfect Close*, and if you'd like to cut to the chase and learn it right now, jump to Chapter 12. You'll have the technique before the end of the chapter.

The rest of this book will help you maximize The Perfect Close technique as well as all of your face-to-face client encounters. It will share cutting-edge psychology that explains why The Perfect Close works, and why your intent matters more than the technique.

You'll discover how to add value to every single meeting you have, and how to plan your meetings in a way that differentiates you from your competition.

You'll learn to add continuous momentum and advance your sales in a way that ultimately culminates in more closed business and faster closed business.

All this you will learn while you move toward a Zen-like state where closing is effortless and in full alignment with your personal values.

The bottom line is you will know everything necessary to close every sale. You don't need a hundred-and-one closes (one for every occasion), and you don't even need to master selling. All you really need is an easy, facilitative way to advance your sales to closure. It's that simple.

You can download a PDF model of The Perfect Close right now at PureMuir.com as a reference guide. Throughout the book I mention resources I've made available for you at PureMuir.com. Go there! Please, use them! This book and the tools I've provided to support you offer the best of everything I have researched, seen, and put into practice myself in the realm of closing. It is THE best practice in sales closing all in one, life-changing, little book. And, it is simple to boot! Let's get started!

CHAPTER 1

Why Should I Bother to Learn The Perfect Close?

"Being pushy, isn't part of my nature. I hate pitching. I detest anything that smacks of manipulation."
–Jill Konrath

Professionals sell about half of what they set out to sell. For a decade or more, quota attainment by professional sales reps has hovered between 50% to 60%, and most recently quota attainment has been trending downward.[1] Some industries are slightly better, many are much worse, and sales as a profession continues to be among the highest turnover positions in business.[2]

So what's going on here? There are a host of reasons for these dynamics: Economic challenges, increased competition, time constraints, pricing pressures and lower margins, increased complexity, increased market noise, challenges servicing existing clients, dysfunctional buying and selling, and the list goes on.

The face of selling and the way customers buy has been undergoing a fundamental change for years. Josh Gordon, author of *Selling 2.0,* and others began to document this trend back in 2000. The maturation of the Internet has forever changed the way that the business-to-business and business-to-consumer buying process takes place.

Older methods of selling continue to wane in effectiveness. Tom Snyder coauthor of *Escaping the Price-Driven Sale* says it this way, "The key to value creation is providing insight rather than information. In today's marketplace customer value does not reside in flogging products or services but rather the manner in which products and services are sold."[3]

A consistent set of individuals across all industries and professions are embracing this change, and in spite of the above-mentioned challenges they continue to outperform regardless of the circumstances. In the coming chapters, we will explore exactly why certain individuals not only succeed but actually thrive in these conditions. Understanding and adopting their successful habits will give you an edge as you ultimately implement The Perfect Close.

So back to the original question—why should you take the time to learn The Perfect Close? Well, the most fundamental reason would be to generate more sales and earn more revenue, but that's just scratching the surface. Let me outline why you will find it worth your time to learn *this particular approach* as the vehicle to drive your closing process.

First, it is very easy to learn. You can learn the basic approach in less than five minutes. Actually, it is extremely important that the approach *be* simple, which leads me to…

Are Closing Techniques Like Diets?

I am a fitness buff, and unless you've been living under a rock for the past 30 years you know that there are countless diets and other dietary or nutritional products promising all kinds of miraculous results. Over the years, in my quest for better and better fitness, I have learned (and tried) many of these diet and fitness solutions. It has now become a hobby to analyze each new diet, gadget, and technique to understand their

underpinnings and how much truth, practicality, and hype exist in each.

Unfortunately, a huge percentage of these products are garbage. Many of them have an idea or principle that is valid, but the results are blown way out of proportion in relation to what can truly be achieved using these solutions. On the other hand, some actually work…

Take diets for example, there are quite a number of them with merit. The problem is that some diets are ridiculously complicated and too difficult to maintain, let alone adopt as an ongoing lifestyle. All the current leaders in fitness and nutrition now agree that the ease of going on and maintaining a diet is a major factor (if not *the* major factor) in the creation of a successful diet. If people can't effectively start or maintain the diet, it doesn't matter how effective it *could* be because they won't be able to sustain it. And that, my friends, is why I am going on and on about diets in a book about advancing the sale—because closing techniques suffer similar complications.

Name any book on closing, and odds are, I've read it. There are books with hundreds of sales closes in them, each with their own clever name, like the *board of nails* close, or the *one-dollar-for-one-hundred-dollars* close, or my all-time favorite the *Atomic-what-would-Jesus-do-BOMB* close (no, I'm not kidding). Someday, to give you a good laugh and protect the innocent souls out there who might actually consider using one of these gems, I'll put up a website with a Sales Closing Wall of Shame listing all of the ridiculous closes I've collected over the years.

Just like the diets, most of these closes are garbage—and by garbage, I mean counter-productive. They will actually *hurt* your chances of closing the sale (in upcoming chapters, I will share well-researched studies in this area), but also like the diets, some of these techniques actually

work from time to time. And thus, the confusion sets in.

Some of these old-school closes are very elaborate, are specialized for particular situations, and require intricate setups. Some take hours to execute. This is again where they are like diets. If there is too much to remember, or they are too complicated to execute, then no one will use them. Who wants to take the time to memorize one-hundred-and-one closes—one for every possible situation? What if in the heat of the moment I use the wrong one? Oh, the pressure!

It's a waste of time and effort to use what amounts to a counter-productive close 90% of the time. It is also totally unnecessary. Again, just like a diet, the approach must be easy enough to follow so that when it comes time to actually use the approach, it becomes second nature.

This is one of the reasons why you should learn The Perfect Close—because it is simple, easy to learn, and you can use it in every situation. It's so effective, in fact, that I guarantee you will use it in all sorts of non-selling situations as well.

But Is It Really Perfect?

I can hear some of you now, "James, you have a lot of chutzpah calling this The Perfect Close. Sure, being easy to learn and easy to use is good, but that doesn't make it *perfect*."

I agree completely. We could round up a bunch of closes that are easy to learn and use but are completely ineffective and/or even counter-productive. If The Perfect Close were nothing more than easy to learn and use, in my mind it would not qualify as *perfect*. But The Perfect Close is so much more for you than just easy to learn and use. Here's a few more reasons why.

Tricks & Manipulation Techniques Don't Work

Now is probably a good time to mention that I generally hate sales tricks and manipulative techniques. Like my friend Jill Konrath (who is a tremendous author, teacher, and inspiration), I hate anything designed to trap or manipulate people. In fact, I don't even like the term *perfect close*. I prefer to think of it as an *approach* as opposed to a *close*, but I had to call it something. So I took the advice of one of my students who called it *perfect* (besides, The Perfect *Approach* sounds a little funky to me).

As we will cover in an upcoming chapter, your intent when working with a client matters a great deal and is the foundation of the entire approach. Genuine, honest intent leaves zero room for trickery and manipulation.

What else could possibly qualify this approach as perfect? Well, brace yourself—it nearly always works. Yes, along the lines of 95%.

Oh, I can hear the cries now, "You mean to tell me, James, that every time I use this approach I'm going to get a contract and a sale?!" No, that's not what I mean (though many times you will indeed get a sale). Allow me to explain.

How Science Has Advanced Selling—What We Now Know

The world (and especially the sales world) owes a great debt of gratitude to a man named Neil Rackham who conducted the largest-ever study of professional selling—observing more than 35,000 sales calls in over 20 countries. Rackham's studies have illuminated many important dynamics regarding selling, and we will be referring to him and his studies' results throughout this work. Among other things, Rackham introduced and labeled the sales concept of the *advance*.

In his seminal work *SPIN Selling*, Rackham defines an advance as an event that takes place, either during the call or right after it that moves the sale toward a decision.[4] I will add additional important nuance to this in an upcoming chapter. For now, how this relates to The Perfect Close is this: If The Perfect Close doesn't produce a sale or contract, it will always produce an advance. Or said another way, The Perfect Close will either produce an actual close, or it will move the sale toward a decision—every time.

Let me tell you from personal experience that this is a wonderful quality because it means that the approach can be used over and over again, each time advancing the sale toward ultimate closure. Because the approach produces either a close or an advance, in that sense, it always works. That is an incredible advantage over every other method.

Are You Making the Same Mistake Over and Over?

I know what you're thinking. Did he just say "over and over" in that last paragraph? Are you afraid that the approach will require that you ask for the sale over and over? Are you worried that you will be seen as too aggressive or pushy by repeatedly asking for business? Well, you should be.

Your instincts serve you well here because one of the findings that Rackham discovered is that within the same call, past the first attempt, there is a *negative* correlation between the number of times a salesperson asks for a close and sales success. Additionally, he found that the more closing attempts there were past the first attempt on the same call the lower the success rate.[5] That's right, and this data has been widely published since 1988. So everything you've heard about the ABCs of selling meaning "Always Be Closing" is complete hogwash. Asking for the sale

over and over will do nothing more than hurt your chances of actually closing.

We will expand on this topic in a later chapter. The takeaway here is that the inner instinct you have to not badger a client is correct. Asking for the sale more than once per meeting is counter-productive and will hurt your sales.

So what did I mean by "over and over?" I mean that once you learn it, the approach is flexible enough to use over and over without offending clients, and without you sounding like a broken record. I would also say that while it is possible to get more than one advance in each meeting with a client (more on that later), generally you will be using the approach only once per encounter with the client.

Do Real Closers Have Schizophrenia?

In this same vein, as a sales manager I have coached sales reps for years, and one of the comments I often hear is, "After I've worked to develop a good relationship with a client, I have a hard time just suddenly changing my personality into Mr. Aggressive Super-Closer and going for the jugular because 'corporate needs more sales now!'" This is also a common challenge among other non-selling professionals who must sell their own services.

One of my favorite things about The Perfect Close approach that makes it so *perfect* is that it doesn't require you to suddenly change your personality and become something you are not. You will see that it is totally natural and absolutely non-confrontational. This allows professionals and salespeople alike to close more business in a way that avoids the negative, slick salesperson association that is so often well-deserved among some individuals.

Because the approach is collaborative and non-confrontational it completely eliminates the tension and stress felt by both clients and professionals. Clients will see you as a valuable facilitator. The Perfect Close approach will set you apart and differentiate you from your competition and help you build long-lasting relationships that go beyond a simple transaction.

One of the reasons the approach creates better relationships is that clients feel more in control of the entire process. The approach puts them in the driver's seat while you guide them, and ironically, this accelerates the entire process because of the trust factor involved. As Stephen M. R. Covey has outlined so well in his book *The Speed of Trust*, "Trust always affects two outcomes: speed and cost. When trust goes down, speed goes down and cost goes up."[6] Of course the corollary to this is the focus of his book, which is that as we increase trust we both increase speed and decrease costs.

[Call-out Quote: "Trust always affects two outcomes: speed and cost. When trust goes down, speed goes down and cost goes up." –Stephen M. R. Covey, *The Speed of Trust*]

I have found this to be so true that occasionally I find clients almost over-trusting to the point where they begin to take shortcuts. That is, they trust so much in the sales professional that they don't take the time to cover certain details because they are confident that they will ultimately be taken care of. This is valuable trust indeed and something that must be managed with great responsibility and care.

The benefit this brings is that it accelerates the entire process and maintains the momentum of the sale. You will cover more steps in less time, and spend less time between steps.

Are You Giving Your Clients What They Expect?

As you guide clients through each step of the sales process, you will be giving them more of what they expect—while at the same time improving their perception of your solution. This is because the client can see the entire picture, and the important major and minor steps are highlighted for what happens before, during, and after the sale.

All too often the salesperson presents their solution at a speed far in excess to the client's ability to absorb it—feeding them from the proverbial fire hose. This happens because the salesperson fears they may not get another chance to present all the glorious features and benefits of their solution. So, they fervently spew everything they can in whatever time is allotted.

While this rapid rate of transfer may make sense to the salesperson—who goes through this process day in and day out—it unfortunately backfires because clients frequently can't absorb information at this same rate.

The Perfect Close approach addresses this challenge by allowing the client to throttle each step to a rate they can receive and digest. This increases the value of each step and of the client's overall perception of your solution.

One interesting aspect of the approach worth mentioning is that, while not ideal, it can often step you through what to do next during a client encounter without you even realizing what the most appropriate next step is. Of course it is always better for you to know your own process, but this aspect of the approach is nice for new or inexperienced professionals who may not have yet determined their sales process. In most cases, the approach will naturally advance you through all the steps and

literally teach them to you on the fly.

A valuable side-effect of the approach is that your client's responses to each advance will tell you exactly where you stand with that client. As a sales manager, this is tremendous for accurate forecasting. It also allows us to quickly identify prospects that will never close and eliminates surprises where clients suddenly go with a competitor.

If you have ever despised manipulative selling techniques or even disliked the confrontation associated with closing, you are likely to see advancing the sale in an entirely different light after reading *The Perfect Close*. You won't see advancing the sale or closing as something you do TO the client, but rather you'll see it as something you do WITH the client—collaborating with the client to continually advance them toward their desired results.

Let's quickly summarize the five top reasons why it makes sense to learn The Perfect Close:

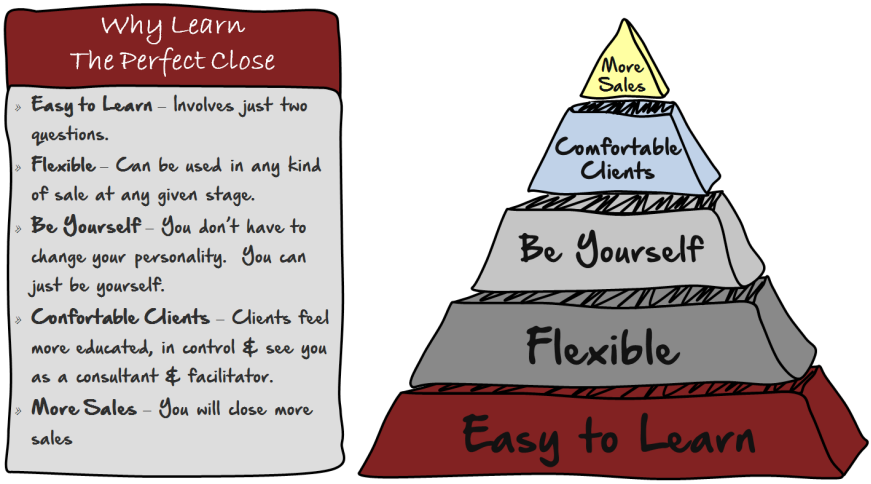
1. Easy to Learn – It involves just two questions and can be learned in as little as five minutes.

2. Flexible – It can be used in any kind of sale at any given stage.

3. Be Yourself – You don't have to change your personality or be something you're not. You can just be yourself.

4. Comfortable Clients – Your clients will feel more educated, more in control and will see you as a consultant and facilitator.

5. More Sales – You will close more sales.



All of this is much more fun than the high-pressure, confrontational approach of yesterday. Picture it—having fun with clients, working on the same side of the table with them, helping them achieve better results while achieving better results yourself—all with a repeatable process that will serve you your entire life. That is how it works.

Are you ready to get started?

Closing Secret #1 - Closing is more effective when it isn't high-pressure or manipulative.

Closing Secret #2 - The best closing approach must be easy enough to follow so that when it comes time to actually use the approach, it is second nature.

Note: There are 22 Closing Secrets referenced throughout this book. Download the reference guide along with a PDF model of The Perfect Close at PureMuir.com

CHAPTER 2

What Is Closing Anyway?

"Closing is the act of obtaining commitments, including all of the decisions that advance the sale."
–Anthony Iannarino

So what exactly is closing? There are nearly as many definitions as there are authors, trainers, and salespeople. Some of these definitions are quite good. Others—not so much. For example, "Doing whatever you have to do to get the customer to sign," isn't so good in my book.

Asking for the sale, asking for the order, and similar definitions are common. This type of definition essentially boils down to "that thing you say that gets the customer to buy." While useful for some purposes, this definition perpetuates one of the biggest problems with closing techniques—that it paints the close as an all or nothing request. And as we shall see below, the vast majority of sales cannot be treated this way.

Other definitions are much more broad and holistic. These definitions boil down to something like, "Closing is everything you do from the beginning of the sale to final completion of the transaction and beyond." And I believe this, by the way. The problem is that these types of definitions essentially redefine *closing* as all of *selling*, which makes the

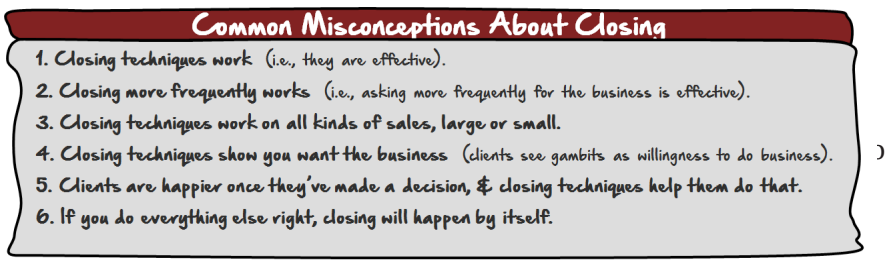
definition so broad that it limits its usefulness. And we're only defining this so we can get better results, right?

There really is no reason for us to re-invent the wheel here. For our purposes in this book we are going to accept Neil Rackham's definition of a *close* (just like we did for the term *advance*) and build on it. Here is Rackham's definition: "A close is anything that puts the customer in a position involving some kind of commitment."[1]

[Call-out quote: "A close is anything that puts the customer in a position involving some kind of commitment." –Neil Rackham

This gives us a workable definition that fits somewhere between "it's all or nothing" and "it's everything." This is an important aspect of The Perfect Close because while we will sometimes get a final completed transaction, many times what we will achieve is an advance. For the most part, I use the term *close* and *advance* synonymously. That will allow us to discuss the idea of "closing on a minor-step," "going for a minor-close," "advancing the sale," or "getting an advance." All of these essentially mean the same thing.

Do You Have Any of the Common Misconceptions About Closing?



Misconception #1 - Closing Gambits Work

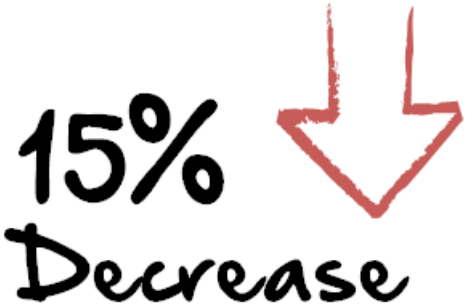
Some people call these "techniques." I call them gambits—a contrived or manipulative phrase designed to force a commitment. Some folks believe there is a magic phrase that if you say it, it will cause your client to be overcome with your verbal persuasion and buy whatever it is you are selling.

The premise behind virtually all of the advice on closing techniques is that it is effective to use these gambits when making an effort to close business. People who have a lot of faith in closing techniques might be surprised to discover that Rackham tested the correlation between a favorable attitude toward closing techniques and actual sales results. He found that individuals with the best attitude toward closing techniques were actually less likely to hit their sales targets. In the study, test subjects with a *favorable attitude* toward closing techniques actually performed 21% below those with *less favorable* attitudes.[2]



In a later study of the effectiveness of sales-closing training, Rackham tested whether or not salespeople utilized closing techniques more frequently after having received training on the subject, and to what degree

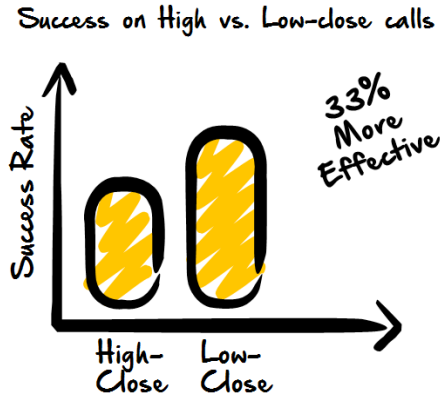
closing techniques increased sales success. Rackham states the results this way, "Closing [as a technique] turned out to be negatively related to success. After the training, the sellers used more closing techniques—so in one sense the training was effective. However, because fewer calls succeeded, the overall effect of the training was a decrease in sales." In the study the overall success rate decreased sales success by approximately 15%.[3]



So yes, closing gambits work—at losing you business.

Misconception #2 - Closing More Often Works

Thanks to Alec Baldwin in the movie *Glengarry Glen Ross* we all know the ABCs of sales: "Always Be Closing." We also sometimes hear this as the axiom, "Close early and often." Unfortunately, as alluded to previously, this has been tested, and beyond the first attempt there is a negative correlation between closing frequency and sales call success. In his first study on the topic Rackham found that *high close calls* (calls that averaged 5.8 closing behaviors) had a success rate of approximately 37%; where *low close calls* (calls that averaged 1.4 closing behaviors) had a success rate of approximately 70%. So, increasing close attempts actually proved to be 33% less effective.



Misconception #3 - Closing Techniques Work on All Kinds of Sales

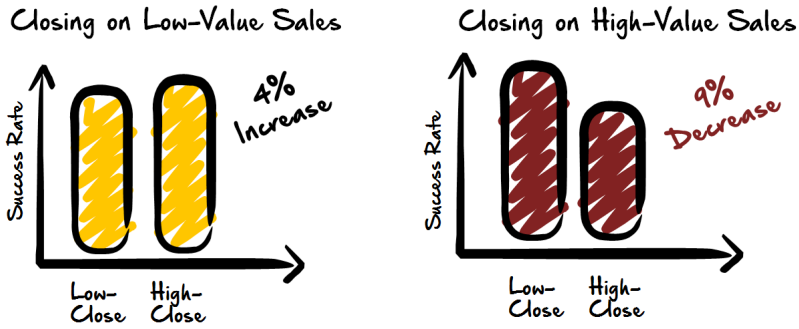
Proponents of closing gambits would have you believe that these approaches can be applied effectively across a wide spectrum of sales—everything from rocket wreckage to everlasting Gobstoppers. Unfortunately, research suggests otherwise.

Neil Rackham discovered in his research that closing techniques *can indeed* be more effective when the scope of the sale is *small*. The three metrics of the study were:

> Transaction Time – How long did each sale or attempted sale take?
>
> Number of Closes – How often did the seller use a closing behavior?
>
> Percentage of Sale – What percent of transactions resulted in a purchase?

What the study found is that when the value of the goods being sold was small, use of closing techniques both speeded the transaction time

as well as the number of transactions resulting in a sale. In *low-close* calls where the number of closes averaged 1.3 attempts per transaction, transactions had a success ratio of 72%. In *high-close* calls where the number of attempts per call averaged 1.9, transactions had a success ratio of 76%.[4] So in selling low-value goods, more attempts to close improved performance by 4%.



However, as the value of the goods being sold increased, success in the transaction reversed and closing became counter-productive. In the case of the higher-value goods in *low-close* calls where the number of closes averaged 2.7 attempts per transaction, transactions had a success ratio of 42%. In *high-close* calls where the number of attempts per call averaged 4.5, transactions had a success ratio of 33%.[5]

So while attempts were up and transaction time was speeded, overall success dropped measurably in the high-value goods arena.

Rackham describes the phenomenon, "The psychological effect of pressure seems to be this. If I'm asking you to make a very small decision, then—if I pressure—it's easier for you to say yes than to have an argument. Consequently, with a small decision, the effect of pressure is positive. But this isn't so with large decisions. The bigger the decision, the more negatively people generally react to pressure."[6]

Rackham observes, "By forcing the customer into a decision, closing techniques speed the sales transaction." And that, "Closing techniques may increase the chances of making a sale with low-priced products. With expensive products or services, they reduce the chances of making a sale."[7]

This is an important dynamic to be aware of when planning your efforts to close sales.

So what is the threshold? At what price point do closing techniques become counter-productive? In Rackham's study it was only $109.[8]

While your situation may be different, all of the people I work with sell goods and services with values higher than this level. So if you are selling a lot of stuff lower than $109, maybe now is the time to whip out the *Double-Reverse Close*. On the other hand, if your solutions are somewhere north of this, the idea that using closing gambits is effective is not only wrong—it is counter-productive and will sabotage your closing efforts.

Misconception #4 - Closing Techniques Show You Want the Business

At face value this is completely true. Why would a person bother trying to close the sale if they didn't actually want it? This isn't really the issue. The client knows you want the business. The real question here is whether or not your use of a closing gambit is seen positively or negatively by the client.

In a study conducted by Jon Hawes, James Strong, and Bernard Winick, 237 industrial buyers were questioned on this subject. Six closure techniques were researched: The Assumptive Close, Yes Set, Model/Example, Reciprocity, If-Then, and Impending Event. The customer's trust in

the salesperson was then tested by a means of 24 pairs of characteristics on a seven-step scale. The results showed that every single technique tested damaged the basis of trust. Predictably, the most manipulative techniques damaged trust the most.[9]

If you want to show your client you want their business—tell them. Or, do something special for them. There are far better ways to show you want the business than insulting them with a closing gambit.

Misconception #5 - Clients Are Happier After They've Made a Decision (so using closing techniques on them is actually helping them)

Let me rephrase this. The thinking seems to be: Clients are happier after they have made a decision, so manipulating or pressuring the client into a purchase is actually for their own good.

I'm sure you recognize this as the-end-justifies-the-means thinking, and I'm sure it makes for great rationalization among some salespeople. But, as it turns out, it is wrong. How satisfied people are with their decisions after they make them while under pressure happens to be an area well studied by social scientists. The studies show that the vast majority of people are very much *less satisfied* with the decisions they make under pressure.[10-13] This is especially true with purchasing decisions. This can have serious negative ramifications to your after-the-sale relationships and long-term success with clients. If you want to avoid buyer remorse, cancelations, and left-field complaints after the sale I recommend you avoid this thinking.

Let's sum up the first five misconceptions and what we can learn from them before moving on to our final misconception.

Common Misconceptions About Closing	Lesson Learned
1. **Closing techniques work** (i.e., they are effective).	– Use of closing techniques has been shown to be negatively correlated to sales success when used frequently.
2. **Closing more frequently works** (i.e., asking more frequently for the business is effective).	– Past the first attempt, there is a negative correlation between closing and sales success.
3. **Closing techniques work on all kinds of sales, large or small.**	– Increasing closing frequency is modestly more effective in small purchases. – Increasing closing frequency is less effective in larger purchases. – Increasing closing frequency reduces transaction time (win or lose) regardless of size.
4. **Closing techniques show you want the business** (clients see gambits as willingness to do business).	– Use of traditional closing techniques reduces client trust.
5. **Clients are happier once they've made a decision, & closing techniques help them do that.**	– Clients are less satisfied with decisions when forced to make them under pressure.

These are important dynamics to remember as we plan our closing approach. Now, let's move on to misconception #6.

Misconception #6 - If You Do Everything Else Right, the Sale Will Close Itself

With all this talk of how closing techniques and gambits don't work you might come to the conclusion that you should make no closing attempt at all. Indeed, there are several proponents of this mentality. But alas, this is taking it too far. Studies show that you *must* make an effort to advance the sale in order to be successful. Let us look at the data.

Across all industries, studies show that the problem of not advancing the sale *at all* is much bigger than the problem of using closing gambits. While it varies per industry, surveys indicate that the percentage of salespeople and professionals who never ask for a commitment or an

advance ranges from 50% to 90%. The average across industries seems to be about 60%.[14-18]



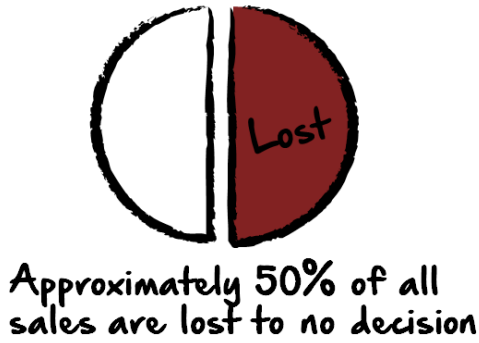
Based on research done by Huthwaite, asking at least one closing question will raise your chances of advancing or closing the sale by 36% or so. One study showed that asking just one closing question raised the percentage of successful sales from 25% to 61%.[19]



Rackham says it this way, "Traditional closing techniques are not the best way to obtain commitment from a customer in a major sale. But… as we've seen, doing nothing isn't effective either. The sale doesn't close itself."[20]

This is an important point. You *must* make some sort of effort to advance or close the sale. The sale will not close itself.

In a related area (again it varies across industries), a large percentage of deals are lost to no decision. That is, business is not lost to a competitor, but rather the client decides to do nothing. In many industries it is the single largest reason for the loss of sales. The percentage of losses due to no decision ranges from 20% to 80% depending on industry with the average seeming to be around 45% to 60%.[21-24]



Closing Secret #3 - You will have to make an effort to close the sale. The sale will not close itself. By asking for commitment in the right way you can move forward without being pushy.

According to social scientists using the Meyer-Briggs Type Indicator and other profiling systems, up to 41% of society are what they refer to as *options people* or people who are generally more comfortable before making a decision rather than after. They see non-decision as leaving them with options as opposed to making a decision which they see as limiting their choices.[25]

How you frame and communicate your offering matters a good deal to this population segment, but that isn't the focus of this book. The important takeaway however is that part of your role is that of a facilitator—helping buyers come to a conclusion that is in their best interest.

Salespeople and professionals are frequently frustrated by *options people* because their decision process can take what seems like forever. This is one more reason why it is critical for salespeople and professionals to be able to advance the sale in a non-manipulative way.

Why Traditional Closing Efforts Fail

There two main reasons why closing efforts fail.

1. Salespeople and professionals don't really make an effort.
2. When an effort is made, the approach used doesn't work (or is counter-productive).

In management parlance we refer to these as *will* and *skill*. That is, it's common that they either don't have the *will* to ask for a commitment, or they don't have the *skill* to ask for a commitment.

Of these two, managers prefer to see skill as the main problem because it is usually remedied through training. On the other hand, *will* or a reluctance to initiate the skill is seen by most managers as a much bigger challenge because it makes the skill irrelevant. In fact, many managers are of the opinion that *will* issues cannot be corrected. They argue that while a skill can be trained, reluctance to initiate a skill is a motivational issue and a personality attribute which cannot be learned.

I disagree. In my experience, the key to addressing any kind of reluctance is to address the underlying issues and beliefs that are the source

of the reluctance. A paradigm shift in these underlying issues can make the reluctance disappear.

When it comes specifically to closing business I have discovered that reluctance is a symptom of fear and/or shame:

- The professional fears being pushy.
- The professional fears being humiliated.
- The professional fears being under-prepared.
- The professional fears losing a closed sale.
- The professional is ashamed to be in sales.

What you're about to discover is that The Perfect Close addresses four (and sometimes all five) of these underlying issues. This means that The Perfect Close is the solution to both the *will* challenge as well as the *skill* challenge.

By placing a little thought into the specific way we engage clients (the way we ask), we can move forward without being pushy. By crafting our questions in a way that makes replies predictable, we eliminate risk of humiliation. By keeping our questions simple and facilitative, there is no need to over-prepare. By using an ingeniously designed query, each reply will advance the sale. And perhaps most importantly, by selling with pure intent, sales becomes a noble profession not worthy of shame.

The Perfect Close will teach you the *skill* you need—exactly what to say. Once you discover how it aligns with your own value system it will help you with your *will* as well.

One more note on developing your desire. Zig Ziglar was fond of saying, "You can have everything in life that you want, if you will just help enough other people get what they want." Closing is an act of service. Ask yourself who you are closing for. Is it for you, or is it for them? What are your motives? I assure you, your customers can tell.

Making money is a wonderful side effect of closing well. But life is about more than making money; it's about making a difference in the lives of others.

Your customers expect you to help them make the positive changes that will bring about their desired results. They expect you to encourage them to become better than they are. Coaching customers toward improvement is a noble purpose. Accept the challenge. Be their coach and guide them through each little commitment it takes to achieve their goals.

Show them the way. Show them that each commitment is a step in the right direction. Encourage and challenge them to take action. When your clients achieve their goals, they will be grateful and thankful, and will credit you as a contributor to their success. This is the sweet spot of selling. Skills and technique are still very important factors, however once you have adopted this attitude and mindset (which you can do today) you will find your selling work infinitely more satisfying.

In fact, your mindset and intent are an important part of what makes The Perfect Close work. You might be surprised to discover that top sales performers have a more pronounced sense of purpose and outperform their peers who focus primarily on sales goals and money.[26]

For that reason I devote the next chapter to mindset and intent, and how to develop it within yourself. I think you will be surprised and fascinated

by the new discoveries and science that has emerged in this area. What you are about to learn will help you with The Perfect Close as well as with all aspects of your personal life.

Closing Secret #4 - Understanding that closing is helping your client and in alignment with your personal values can eliminate reluctance.

Conclusion

Helping you discover and implement a successful approach to advancing and closing your sales is the purpose of this book. In the next chapter, we will make sure that our head is in the right place and get into the actual approach that you and your clients will find *perfect.*

CHAPTER 3

Adopting the Right Mindset

"If your intention is flawed, the best technique in the world will not save you."
–Jeff Shore

Ask yourself, "Why do I want to advance this sale? Why do I want to close?"

Actually think about it a bit. What is driving your desire to move this opportunity forward?

As you think of the reasons, list them on a piece of paper. Most people will have less than five real reasons or drivers. Give it a shot—I promise this quick exercise will pay off.

Now, look at your list. Which one would you say is your top driver? Which is secondary and so on? Quickly prioritize them by what is motivating you the most.

Now complete the following sentence by inserting each of your motivations:

"Thanks for meeting with me today. My top priority is to [fill in the blank with your response]."

Try it for each of the drivers you wrote down.

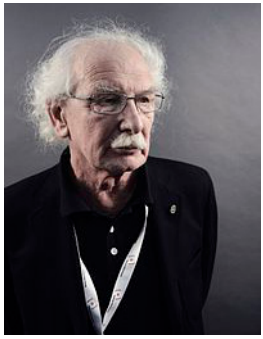
How did it turn out? Is this something you would be willing to say to a prospective client? Would any of the reasons/motivations you wrote down be appropriate to say to a prospective client? In most cases, probably not, but what you might find extremely alarming is:

You are already communicating these desires unintentionally.

And these messages can have a very big effect on your results. Going into a client interaction with the wrong mindset can negatively affect the outcome. Conversely, the right mindset will positively affect your outcome. And that is the object of this chapter—to help you adopt the mindset that will positively affect all of your interactions.

How Mindset Affects Your Interactions

In the 1990s an Italian neurophysiologist named Giacomo Rizzolatti made an amazing discovery. He and his team were researching brain function using monkeys as test subjects. The monkeys were being monitored by machines that registered their brain activity.



Italian neurophysiologist Giacomo Rizzolatti

The scientists would encourage the monkeys to do various activities by offering a reward—a peanut, a food they love. When a monkey receives

and eats a peanut the pleasure centers of their brains light up like a Christmas tree.

One day, one of the researchers ate a peanut in front of one of the monkeys, and an amazing thing happened. The monkey's pleasure centers lit up, just as if the monkey had eaten the peanut himself.

This was an unexpected development, and after much more investigation Rizzolatti's research team discovered that both monkeys and humans have something called mirror neurons that mimic both the actions and emotions of those around them (simian or human).

Much research in the area of mirror neurons has been completed since that time, and through the miracle of Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) modern science can now watch the brain's responses to stimuli in real time.

As it turns out, mirror neurons are involved in a tremendous number of psycho-social areas including: language, learning, self-awareness, and most importantly for our discussion—understanding intentions and empathy.

A key takeaway here is that we are an empathic species. When we see another living being experience an emotion such as happiness or sorrow, our mirror neurons cause us to experience that emotion along with them. There is a whole invisible level of communication going on.

Mirror neurons make it possible to understand another person's point of view, and just as importantly as we'll see in a moment, their intent. It is important for us to be aware of these distinctions so that we understand the involuntary messages that our prospective clients are receiving from us.

What Is Your Nonverbal Communication Saying?

You may be familiar with the TV series *Lie to Me* which aired from 2009 – 2011. It was inspired by the work of renowned psychologist Paul Ekman who served as a consultant to the show. In the series Dr. Cal Lightman and his team used their knowledge of body language and facial expressions to effectively act as human polygraph machines and uncover the truth for law enforcement, law firms, corporations, and individuals.

The results are both entertaining and educational. For example, in the pilot episode Lightman interviews a man who refuses to speak at all, yet Lightman is able to discern vital information by gauging the man's reactions to his verbal cues.

Ekman began his research into nonverbal communication in the mid-1950s and focused on developing techniques for actually measuring nonverbal communication. Through empirical research of the muscular movements that create facial expression, he discovered that human beings are capable of more than 10,000 facial expressions—3,000 of which are relevant to emotion.



Psychologist Paul Ekman

Thanks to Ekman, we understand *micro-expressions* as brief, involuntary human facial expressions derived from immediate, inner emotions. Mi-

cro-expressions occur most frequently in high-stakes situations where people have something to lose or gain. Micro-expressions also occur when a person is consciously trying to conceal signs of how they are feeling, or when they do not consciously know how they are feeling.[1, 2] Unlike regular facial expressions, micro-expressions are very brief in duration, lasting only 1/25th to 1/15th of a second, and very difficult if not impossible to hide.[3]

These systems are constantly in play. Your autonomic system is continuously sending signals that reveal your intentions and emotions. And just as importantly, your subconscious and autonomic systems are working 24/7 reading the body language of others to decode their intentions and emotions.

"Your autonomic system is continuously sending signals that reveal your intentions and emotions."

It is a deciphering system to determine friend or foe, honesty or deception—to decide if you are on their side or not. Basic, simple detections like these might be described as intuition or a *gut reaction*, but what is critical to understand is that your intentions are very important in your interactions with others.

You also give out similar signals with your voice. This too is mostly an unconscious activity.[4] It's called *paralanguage* and is the part of verbal communication that changes meaning via volume, pitch, intonation, and prosody. Paralinguistic speech plays a very important role in human interactions because every spoken communication contains these non-lexical speech signals.

Unlike micro-expressions, individuals have greater control over paralanguage. In most cases attitudes are expressed intentionally while emotions are more often expressed unintentionally.[5] Thus, paralanguage, while important, is secondary to visual cues.[6] Nevertheless it is important to be aware of the non-lexical messages we may be sending via our volume, pitch, speed, and intonation.

Your prospective clients are consciously and unconsciously detecting your involuntary signals which ultimately develops their general impressions about you. I know what you're thinking, "James, how can I possibly control all of these things in my interactions with clients?"

Consciously, you can't. Evidence indicates all but the most unusual subjects (patients with special mental conditions, for example) are unable to control the myriad involuntary signals we continually transmit.[2]

Further, the ability to detect intention develops at a very early age—emerging in children as young as 18 months and sometimes even earlier.[7, 8] So, basically, we're all experts at reading other people's intentions.

The good news, and the point of this chapter, is that you don't have to worry about your micro-expressions or attempt to control them if you adopt the right mindset. With the right intentions all of these signals will automatically be working for you without you having to think about it. Your body will be sending all of the right messages naturally.

With the right mindset your body will:

- Form the right, positive micro-expressions
- Deliver the ideal tonality

- Express the emotions with which you want your prospective client to empathize
- Communicate the right intention to maximize trust and rapport

All of this will greatly improve both the experience and the outcomes of your interactions with others.

What Is the Right Mindset?

To know what the ideal mindset is, it's important to understand what happens from a psychological perspective in the first seconds of any interaction. Many things occur, but among the first is a determination as to whether the person we're encountering is friend or foe (i.e. do they intend good or ill). This is the basis for forming trust. Immediately following that, the brain ascertains whether the other person has the actual ability to enact those intentions. This is the basis for determining someone's competency.

In an effort to determine the attributes that have the greatest impact on interpersonal communication scientists have conducted a tremendous number of studies. And by all accounts with more than 200 attributes having been tested, the most important and dominate attributes can be placed into two categories: warmth and competence.[9]

For clarity let's briefly define the difference between attributes and traits. Simply put, an attribute is a quality something has. For example, "Her voice has a warm tone," describes an attribute of someone's voice.

In contrast, traits are general behavior tendencies that a particular attribute produces. For example, "Her warm voice makes her very considerate and approachable."

The warmth attribute displays traits related to perceived intent, friendliness, helpfulness, sincerity, trustworthiness, and morality. Whereas the competence attribute reflects traits that are related to perceived ability, intelligence, skill, creativity, and efficacy.[10]

Which attribute is most important? While both warmth and competence consistently rise to the top of attributes in all studies, evidence shows that warmth judgments are primary. That is, warmth is judged before competence, and warmth carries greater weight in affecting social reactions.[11-13]

"While both warmth and competence consistently rise to the top of attributes in all studies, evidence shows that warmth judgments are primary."

We've already established that people infer warmth from the perceived motives and intentions of another person,[14] and that those perceptions are gleaned not only from voluntary actions but also from involuntary messages the other person conveys.

So, in order for our intentions to be perceived as warmth, it's vital that we emanate the related traits that science has identified from the warmth attribute. These include:

- pure intent
- friendliness
- helpfulness
- sincerity
- trustworthiness
- and morality (doing the right thing)

These are the signals we want our autonomic system to be sending.

Take a moment and contrast this list with the primary drivers/motivators that you listed in the exercise at the beginning of the chapter. Is there a difference?

Most people who complete the exercise reveal motivators and drivers similar to, "I want to get paid," or "I want something money can buy." When your prospect senses that your intention is "all about you" they become more guarded.

As a sales manager I've received both good and bad feedback regarding salespeople. One client said they could tell the salesperson was only in it for himself, and they refused to do business with him. To describe their interaction with this salesperson, the client coined a term that has stuck in my mind forever; he called it "commission breath." It fits so perfectly. That is exactly the type of feeling we are trying to avoid.

Prospective buyers experience a great deal of concern and trepidation (especially when the product is beyond their own area of expertise). Their ignorance creates risk for them. They are concerned that an unscrupulous salesperson could take advantage of them—that they'll be sold the wrong product or at the very least they won't get the best value. And when a client decides that a salesperson's intentions are not aligned with their best interests, in most cases, the deal is off.

Often, even when our intentions are good, the larger the opportunity is, the harder it is not to think about what's in it for us. It is ironic then, that despite our intent to earn money in an ethical way, when we enter an interaction with our minds focused on what *we* get out of the interaction, our autonomic system sends precisely the wrong signal for the best outcome.

"When we focus on what we get out of an interaction our autonomic system sends precisely the wrong signal for the best outcome."

Recall the two subconscious determinations that take place in the first seconds of any interaction:

1. What is this person's intent (good or bad)?
2. Does this person have the ability to execute that intention?

These are the two determinations that buyers are making each time they meet with us.

When it comes to purchasing something outside our experience, because of our ignorance, there is no question that the sales agent has the upper hand and the *ability* to possibly take advantage of us. Our inexperience leaves us vulnerable, and therefore, we must rely primarily on the first measurable discriminator—intent.

It is precisely because intent is so heavily weighted in sales situations that we must transmit the right intentions. The key is to adopt a mindset that will have us transmitting the right intentions—one where we genuinely want to help the other person in a friendly and ethical way. There is no need to change your personality or become something you are not.

By genuinely trying to help the other person in a friendly and ethical way our autonomic system will take over and automatically transmit all the right messages. I often marvel at the sublime beauty in this altruistic dynamic.

How to Adopt the Right Mindset

I can hear you now, "For heaven's sake, James! I bought a book about closing. Why are you going on and on about mindset and good intentions?"

I'll tell you why. Because intent matters more than technique.[15]

Let that sink in for a moment.

I can teach you effective techniques, but if you enter the opportunity with "commission breath" it won't matter. Conversely, when a client can detect your genuine intention to help, you can butcher the technique, say gobbledygook and it will still work out. Intent matters more than technique.

So the question now becomes, "How do I get myself into the right mindset?"

As it turns out, we can look to science for help here, as well. There are three simple steps you can take before any interaction to adopt the right mindset:

1. Lose the ego.
2. Create positive emotion.
3. Enter with the right intent.

<u>1. Lose the Ego</u>

Ego is about you and self-importance—either what you hope to receive or the desire to impress others. A strong sense of self-esteem is good and important to the concept of competency. At the same time, because

warmth and intention are weighted more heavily in sales situations, our primary concern is to maximize our warmth factor and transmit that we have the client's best interests at heart.

Enter your initial interactions without any ego-based agenda. Lose the ego. Remain confident and competent, but enter the initial interaction *tabula rasa* (with a blank slate) and no defined agenda other than how you can best help the prospective client.

Having an objective is indeed important and later we will discuss setting up primary and secondary objectives. However, in your initial meetings your goal is to project maximum warmth, genuineness, friendliness, helpfulness, and good intention.

Ego-driven desires cause your autonomic system to send the wrong signals. By losing your ego you will be in the right mindset, and your body will transmit the right messages.

2. Create Positive Emotion

Consider using these recall and a posture techniques to create the ideal emotional state before your meetings.

Positive Recall

The positive recall technique is simple. Recall a time when you really felt friendly and helpful. Remember, what science tells us we're going for here is pure intent, friendliness, helpfulness, sincerity, trustworthiness, and morality. What did it look, sound, smell, feel, and taste like? Make it as vivid as possible, and try to relive the experience.

Here is as an example of a memory I use before meeting with new prospects:

One day, out of the blue, I received a call from a long-time friend. He shared that his company had a new product they were trying to market. My friend was not in sales, and he asked me to visit their office and coach them on how they might improve sales. He wasn't hiring me as a consultant; he was simply asking for a favor. I could tell he was calling because they were in trouble. Naturally, I agreed to help.

Despite this being described as a "casual chat" with his company's top executives, I understood that by bringing me in, he was putting his reputation on the line. So it was important to me that this meeting reflect well on my friend. I invested some time learning all about their product, their processes, the new market they were in, and their results thus far. Out of respect for my friend I wanted the meeting to be as helpful as possible.

At the beginning of the meeting I described what I believed I had uncovered about their situation and asked if I was on target. I wasn't. About 20% of the information I had gathered was incorrect. After these top executives corrected the information and filled in the gaps, we entered into a productive conversation about what I had seen work elsewhere and different ways we could approach their situation.

It was an ultra-productive session where I was freely sharing my experience, and they were receiving new and helpful information. They were so engaged that they bumped their next meeting to continue the conversation. We concluded with an excellent vibe, and they thanked me profusely. As their CEO walked me to the parking lot he asked what he owed me for the visit. I explained that I was doing it out of friendship for my buddy.

Weeks later, my friend shared that they had experienced great success with some of the ideas we discussed. Then unexpectedly I received a

check in the mail from the CEO along with a thank-you note. It was quite a surprise. I recall feeling satisfied and validated that I had truly been helpful that day.

This is just one of the memories I use before meeting with prospective clients to get me into a helpful mindset. Once you're able to re-experience the emotion of your memory, your autonomic system will take care of the rest. Ideally, spend about two minutes doing this to let the physiological processes take effect, and your body will begin telegraphing that you are genuinely trying to help in a friendly and ethical way.[16]

Posture to Improve Emotion and Physiology

The posture technique comes from the relatively new discoveries made by Amy Cuddy and Dana Carney who discovered that postural expressions not only affect people's emotions, but amazingly, they also affect hormone levels.[17-19] Cuddy and Carney discovered that by *faking* body postures associated with the desired emotion, people can positively improve their hormone response. Assuming *power poses,* for example, increases people's testosterone, decreases their cortisol, increases their appetite for risk, and causes them to perform better in job interviews.[20]

For our purpose we want to adopt a posture of friendliness, helpfulness, sincerity, and trustworthiness. To invoke the emotion (and ideal hormonal and physiology), here is the posture we want to adopt:

Arms are open, rounded and relaxed about waist height. Palms are tilted about 45 degrees upwards. Shoulders are relaxed and down (not up near the neck). Legs are not crossed and may even be stretched apart a bit past shoulder width, if it is comfortable. Smile warmly.



"Mock Hug" Welcoming Gesture

Consider the whole posture as a *mock hug* or welcoming gesture. Casually and with flowing variation, maintain this posture for two minutes or so. According to research, it takes two minutes for the hormone response to kick in.[21]

As a reminder, both of these exercises are to be done before your meeting. With a little bit of practice you'll find that you can do them both simultaneously.

3. Enter with the Right Intent

Positive self-talk improves performance in decision making, strategy formulation, academics, sports, overcoming dysfunctions and bad habits, and other complex skills.[22-27]

To program our autonomic system to transmit the right intent, we are simply going to use a couple of affirmations by asking ourselves a question or two that will quickly prime our body to send the right messages about our intent.

Being genuine, say and ask yourself these things before your interaction:

- "You know, I genuinely care about this client. I'm excited to see what they have going on."
- "I'm sure I can help these guys. I can't wait to see what I can do for this client."
- "I want to make a big difference for these guys."
- "I'm curious to learn how I can best help these people. I'm thrilled to find out what I can do for them."

These statements (when said genuinely) will cause you to project the right intentions to others.

Remember, that between the balance of warmth and competence, warmth is weighted more heavily than competence because the prospective client is outside of their area of experience. So projecting the right intention is critical.

It's easy to see how this works, so consider creating some of your own affirmations and questions that tie closely to your line of work. Just remember to tie them back to the traits that science has determined are the most important:

- pure intent
- friendliness
- helpfulness
- sincerity

- trustworthiness
- and morality (doing the right thing)

Share Your Intent

All of the exercises to this point are intended to be done before meeting with your client and can be completed in less than three to five minutes. This prepares you and your autonomic system to transmit the right signals in the first seconds of your interaction, which is important because that's when judgments regarding your warmth and intention happen.

However, there is something you can do while in the presence of your client to project the right intention—actually say it. Tell the client what your intentions are. They will still look for congruence between your verbalization and your body language, and when they match, you will improve your impression by yet another level.

There are many ways to share your intent with clients, and you will need to adjust your message depending on the context of the meeting. So with that in mind, here are some examples to help you create your own intention statements.

Sometimes, short and sweet works. Early in my career I had a technical resource role and was always paired up with another salesperson. So after introducing myself, I'd simply add, "My job is to make sure you get what you want." That always resonated with clients and accurately conveyed that I was their advocate.

Very often prospects will jump the gun and ask for pricing or competitive differentiators before any of the preliminaries are complete. Sometimes I get a question like, "Why should we purchase you over your

competition?" When that question is premature I'll often respond with something along the lines of, "Well I think we might be a good match, but I'm not 100% confident yet. My goal is to get you a solution that exactly matches what you want. Share with me a little about…" In this way I convey that I suspect potential exists, but as their advocate I would like to know more about them and what they are trying to accomplish.

With the early pricing question I often use something along these lines, "My whole career, my formula for success has simply been to do a great job for clients, and then those clients in return have helped me get new business. That means it's not important that I get maximum profit from a deal. I just need to make sure I am in the black. So I promise I'll get you the best deal possible once we know there is a great fit." Sometimes I'll then redirect to discovery with, "So with that in mind can you share with me…?"

Now this dialogue accomplishes many things, but what I want to accentuate here is that my intent to get them the best deal possible is conveyed, and that lets us move on to the important details without getting embroiled into a conversation about price.

Another way you can convey your intent is to weave it into your introduction about your company and culture. An example might be, "What I've come to learn after X years in the business is that every client is unique. So our goal is to get you a solution that is exactly what you want. Most of the time we can do that—but not always—and by working together, we can identify all the dimensions of what you're looking for, and make sure we have a solution that exactly meets your needs." In this way we are conveying our intention that we want what they want, and that will allow us to smoothly move through the process of understanding each other.

These examples should get your juices flowing so you can create your own intention statements that will be congruent with the messages your autonomic system is sending. Together they strongly communicate your intentions to genuinely help the other person in a friendly and ethical way.

Closing Secret #5 - Intent matters more than technique.

Conclusion

Having the right mindset will improve your experience, your prospective client's experience, and improve your outcomes in a most positive way. The techniques described in this chapter will get your mindset in the right place and get your autonomic systems transmitting the right messages, in as little as three to five minutes.

After you have practiced it consistently for some time, you will discover that you are simply always in the mindset. It will become a permanent part of you, and you will automatically transmit this signal 24/7. This is an amazing state to be in from a happiness and personal achievement perspective and may be worth as much as the rest of the techniques you are about to learn. It also hints at a deeper meaning of what selling is—service with pure intent. I encourage you to adopt it not just in selling but also in your everyday life.

To discover more about the latest science and research in this fascinating area, visit PureMuir.com where you can find additional commentary and resources. In the next chapter we will learn about one of the biggest factors in sales success.