

OVERCOMING OBJECTIONS TO INCREASE YOUR INCOME

Written by Melissa Marro

2009 RESA Professional Stager of the Year



www.WeStageSC.com



www.StagingAndRedesign.com

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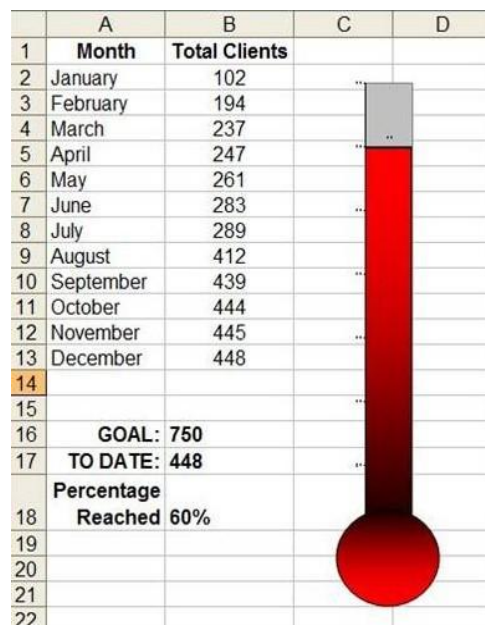
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1.0 Strategizing and Goal Setting

In any business process, we must always begin with strategizing and goal setting. While at first the topics may seem unrelated the fact is that in order to overcome any objection, you must first be clear as to what your OBJECTIVE actually is. For a professional home stager, the objective should be helping the homeowner or agent make a speedy sale and reap the highest return on investment possible. With this in mind, it is important that you are always acting in their best interest and that you do not use these techniques simply to “up-sell” a product or service that is not required to do the job.

Goals should be written and comprehensive. The more clear you are on the objective, the more likely you are to achieve your desired goal.

Goals should be measurable. What is the use of having a goal if you cannot determine if you’ve achieved it, or how close or how far away you are from achieving it? I personally find graphs very useful.



When creating a graph, be sure that the graph extends beyond your actual goal. If your goal is to do \$10,000 in business be sure that your graph is at least 10-20% beyond that. In this case that would mean that it goes to around \$12,000. This way as you approach your goal, your thermometer isn’t visually nearly full.

Think about it – when you fill a glass, how far from the rim of the glass do you stop? Very few people would continue filling their glass all the way to the top of the glass and your goal chart should be no less.

If your goal is the rim, then you will likely fall short because it is our natural inclination to stop near the top – not at the top. You have to provide room for going beyond your goal, or simply ‘empty space’.

Goals should be kept in front of you and visited regularly. Once you have decided on a goal, it is important that they are kept in front of you and viewed as often as possible. It may also be helpful to create a vision board or goal poster with photographs of images that correspond to your goals. Seeing these on a regular and routine basis will help your subconscious work its magic to create the outcome that you desire.

From the book What they don't teach you at Harvard Business School by Mark McCormack:

In the book *What They Don't Teach You in the Harvard Business School*, Mark McCormack tells a study conducted on students in the 1979 Harvard MBA program. In that year, the students were asked, "Have you set clear, written goals for your future and made plans to accomplish them?" Only three percent of the graduates had written goals and plans; 13 percent had goals, but they were not in writing; and a whopping 84 percent had no specific goals at all.

Ten years later, the members of the class were interviewed again, and the findings, while somewhat predictable, were nonetheless astonishing. The 13 percent of the class who had goals were earning, on average, twice as much as the 84 percent who had no goals at all. **And what about the three percent who had clear, written goals? They were earning, on average, ten times as much as the other 97 percent put together.**

If you think written goals are unimportant – think again. All of business begins with the process of written goals. Your business should have begun with the process of creating a business plan, which was your company's initial goal. Every step along the way you will need to set new goals. Some will be very short term – possibly for the hour, the day or the week. Others will be long term – what you want to do in the month, year or decade ahead.

As you are creating these goals, particularly longer term goals, you should make sure that they are fluid goals and that when your goals no longer fit the needs of your life or business then it is time to switch gears. Assessing your goals regularly and determining if they are working for you or against you and if they still make sense for your business will help you keep on track.

2.0 Understanding the Sales Process

Perhaps the biggest mistake salespeople make is not understanding the actual selling process. Because our goal, as a selling professional is often to make money, meet our goals and achieve some degree of status, many forget **the real purpose of the sale professional – HELPING OUR CLIENTS ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS**. That's right! Our job is not about making the sale, but rather helping our clients achieve their goal. When talking about the real estate or home staging profession, that goal is typically to sell their home as quickly as possible with the maximum return on investment possible.

NEVER think of your own goals during the sales process! I hear you... why did I have to set them then? I will explain this in detail later, but for now, realize that when you are working with clients, your goals are not the issue here. This is all about helping them achieve their goals.

Your first priority is finding out what their needs, desires and motivations really are. These are not all the same. If you just begin talking without finding out what they really need or want then you will likely fall prey to what we call in the sale industry, "product vomit". It doesn't sound pretty because it isn't. This is a rookie mistake and one that will cost you sale after sale. Instead, listen carefully then interpret.

Another common mistake for sales professionals is selling to your clients the way that you like to be sold to. The problem is that there are so many different possible personality types that the likelihood that your client is the same as you is almost impossible. Instead **you must understand how they – your clients – like to buy**. Then you must begin to mirror their communication style and rituals.

What does this really mean though? It means that you have to spend more time listening and less time talking. It means that you need to find out if they are quick adaptors or if they need more time and information. Based on the Myers-Briggs test here are some fundamental personality differentiations:

Extraverted Characteristics -

- Act first, think/reflect later
- Feel deprived when cutoff from interaction with the outside world
- Usually open to and motivated by outside world of people and things
- Enjoy wide variety and change in people relationships

Introverted Characteristics -

- Think/reflect first, then Act
- Regularly require an amount of "private time" to recharge batteries
- Motivated internally, mind is sometimes so active it is "closed" to outside world
- Prefer one-to-one communication and relationships

Sensing Characteristics -

- Mentally live in the Now, attending to present opportunities
- Using common sense and creating practical solutions is automatic-instinctual
- Memory recall is rich in detail of facts and past events
- Best improvise from past experience
- Like clear and concrete information; dislike guessing when facts are "fuzzy"

Intuitive Characteristics -

- Mentally live in the Future, attending to future possibilities
- Using imagination and creating/inventing new possibilities is automatic-instinctual
- Memory recall emphasizes patterns, contexts, and connections
- Best improvise from theoretical understanding
- Comfortable with ambiguous, fuzzy data and with guessing its meaning.

Thinking Characteristics -

- Instinctively search for facts and logic in a decision situation.
- Naturally notices tasks and work to be accomplished.
- Easily able to provide an objective and critical analysis.
- Accept conflict as a natural, normal part of relationships with people.

Feeling Characteristics -

- Instinctively employ personal feelings and impact on people in decision situations
- Naturally sensitive to people needs and reactions.
- Naturally seek consensus and popular opinions.
- Unsettled by conflict; have almost a toxic reaction to disharmony.

Judging Characteristics -

- Plan many of the details in advance before moving into action.
- Focus on task-related action; complete meaningful segments before moving on.
- Work best and avoid stress when able to keep ahead of deadlines.
- Naturally use targets, dates and standard routines to manage life.

Perceiving Characteristics -

- Comfortable moving into action without a plan; plan on-the-go.
- Like to multitask, have variety, mix work and play.
- Naturally tolerant of time pressure; work best close to the deadlines.
- Instinctively avoid commitments which interfere with flexibility, freedom and variety

There are four groups and each person falls more into one characteristic or the other in each group (though they may have some characteristics from either category). When you begin to understand how they think and work, you will be better able to understand how your buyers need to be sold to.

This is not a gimmick or a way to manipulate people. This is a way for you to better communicate what it is that you can do for them to help them accomplish their goals.

Learn these types and begin to ask questions to find out how they communicate and you'll find that by mirroring their characteristics, you will have a far more successful closing ratio.

This leads us to the next part of understanding the sales process – working the numbers. In order to meet your sales goals, you will need to learn what your personal close rate is and then begin to work the numbers. As you improve on your ability to mirror your clients' buying styles and overcome objections, your rates will improve. Until then you must first learn to work a little harder to meet your goals.

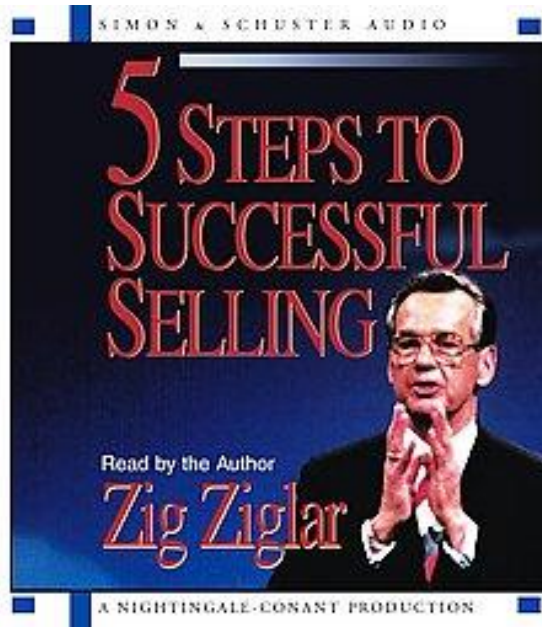
Let's take a moment to 'work the numbers'....

- A new stager may have the goal of staging 1 home a week.
- If their close rate was 50% (a pretty high number for a new stager) then they would need to have at least 2 opportunities to close the deal a week – or 2 consultations/quotes a week.
- The next question is, how many phone calls or appointments do you have to have to generate 2 consultations/quotes? If you have a 25% close ratio (still a pretty high number) then you will need to make at least 8 phone calls or appointments to get your 2 opportunities.

What this means is that in order to stage at least 1 home a week you will have to do at least 8 phone calls/appointments and 2 consultations or quotes. If your numbers are not at the high percentage rates given then you will not be able to reach your goal. Instead you will need to adjust your numbers accordingly.

If you miss your goal for the week and want to stay on track for the month or year, you will need to increase your efforts going into the next goal period.

3.0 The Five Objections



Zig Ziglar, perhaps one of the best salesmen in history broke down all objections into five different categories

1. No Need
2. No Money
3. No Hurry
4. No Desire
5. No Trust

In this Chapter we will explore each of these objections and I will give you some way to overcome some of the most common objections we hear in the industry.

1. **No Need** – Since the home staging profession is still so new, this is a common objection. Many agents and sellers simply haven't embraced the need and don't understand the impact. Of course they rarely simply come out and say we have no need. Instead, here are some of the examples of what you will hear....

"My home already shows great; I always get compliments when people come over.... "

A way to overcome this objection may be:

"Mrs. Seller, I can see why you receive so many compliments. This home is all about you. I can tell instantly when I walk in who you are and what you love. The problem is that buyers may not have the same love or the same personality. If they feel that this fits you more than it fits them,

then they simply will love on to the next house. My goal as a professional home stager is to have your home appeal to as many potential buyers as possible in the likely demographic to sell as quickly as possible for as much money as possible. Is this also your goal?"

"When we sold our last home we didn't have to stage.... "

A way to overcome this objection may be:

"I understand how you feel. The real estate market has change a lot in the last few years. Today buyers have more choices and technology has changed the way they are able to view these choices. Buyers can now view hundreds of properties online without stepping foot into one, narrowing their choices down to a select few. In order to be competitive, price is no longer the overriding factor. Your home needs to show beautifully from the first photo. Buyers need to first connect online or they will never even step foot inside your home. Worse yet, if they don't like what they see online, you will never even know they were looking! Wouldn't you agree that getting potential buyers in the home is vital to the selling process?"

"My home has a great floor plan that's easy to imagine furnished..."

A way to overcome this objection might be:

"Your floor plan is great. Unfortunately when a home is empty, there is nothing for buyers to connect to online – their first point of shopping. Even if you are able to get them into the home, most buyers have a difficult time imagining where the furniture will go, they believe their furniture is larger than it is and because there is no place for your eye to rest, it automatically goes to anything that stands out – which is typically a negative feature like a stain, nail pop or other defect. When you have your home professionally staged, we are able to help control the buyer's eye – showing them the features and benefits in your home while minimizing the negatives. We also add warmth and help the buyer connect with the home so they can imagine living here, rather than a cold empty space. Wouldn't you agree that it is important buyers see the best features of the home and begin to connect with the space?"

Of course these answers are only one possible answer, but they highlight the actual need of home staging. We ended the objection by reminding letting them agree with us on the need we are showcasing.

2. **No Money** – In my opinion, in today's market there is no easier objection to overcome.

“We are already selling at a loss and have to bring money to the closing table. I just can't afford to stage as well... ”

A way to overcome this objection might be:

“I can understand how you feel. I've had many clients in the same situation. What they have found is that when they followed our staging suggestions they actually ended up spending less money. The real question may be for you, do you want to spend a little money now, preparing the home for sale, or spend significantly more money in carrying costs, additional price reductions and lower offers?”

Or

“I can understand how you feel. The average days on market in your neighborhood is 4 months. Did you know that if we just shave 30 days – one month – off of that then you will actually have made all of that money back, plus reduced the likelihood of additional price reductions. Staging, on average, reduces the time in half, meaning if we just get average results, you will actually double your value. Can you see the value of this initial investment?”

“Staging costs too much...”

A way to overcome this objection might be:

“I can understand how you feel. Our initial proposal may feel like a lot of money, however, when you look at local market statistics, I think you'll see that staging is your best option to actually save money in your transaction. By following our suggestions you will be able to sell your home more quickly with fewer price reductions and in the end likely receive higher offers. The average price reduction is around \$5000-\$10,000. As you can see, our staging budget is

nowhere near that amount. Which would you prefer to spend, this small amount of initial money or a larger price reduction and additional carrying costs?"

There are many options for both questions and answers, particularly in the ‘no money’ category. Realistically, as a professional home stager, you know the value you provide. Your goal here is to help them understand the actual numbers. If you don’t know them, you should. Using RESA statistics, here let me share the following example of how much money your clients can save by staging. Feel free to recreate these number into a marketing flyer to demonstrate the point when this situation arises.

The Real Estate Staging Association (RESA) just released its 2010 statistics. These statistics were gathered nation wide and showed the following amazing results:

<u>Vacant & Occupied Homes:</u>	Listed, Un-Staged -	Same Homes - Staged, Listed, SOLD	SOLD
Previously on the Market	NOT SOLD		
2009 Study of 126 Homes	263 Average DOM	60 Average DOM	78% Less Time on Market
<u>Occupied Homes</u>	Staged Before Going on the Market	SOLD	
2009 Study	167 Homes	On Average in 39 Days	
<u>Vacant Homes</u>	Staged Before Going on the Market	SOLD	
2009 Study	117 Homes	On Average in 42 Days	

These statistics show that staging a home **PRIOR** to putting it on the market yields the greatest results. It saves you and your clients time, money and lots of stress! However, even staging a home after it has already been listed for sale, can still help the home sell faster.

As shown in the above national statistics, staging prior to putting the home on the market can save you lots of time. But exactly how much money does that equal? The above study shows that 126 homes were listed on the market for approximately **9 months** before deciding to

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stage. It also shows that 284 homes (vacant & occupied) that were staged prior to being listed sold on average in 40.5 days, or approximately **7 months faster** than the unstaged homes. Here is an example of a formula to use to calculate the savings:

Monthly Mortgage Payment	= \$1800
Direct Expenses	= \$300
Total Monthly Carrying Costs	= \$2100

For the homeowners in our study whose homes were on the market for approximately 9 months their **total expenses were (\$2100 x 9) = \$18,900.**

Had the homeowners staged their homes first, they could have saved 7 months on market and their **savings could have been (\$2100 x 7) = \$14,700.**

These numbers are all relative to individual mortgage and expenses. Use this simple formula to determine how much you will save by staging your home or listing before putting it on the market:

Mortgage + expenses (utilities etc.) = Monthly expenses

Monthly expenses X 9 months (avg. time un-staged) = Cost to list house un-staged

Savings: Expenses x 7 months (average time on market reduced) -staging fee =Savings if you stage your house first!

Consider showcasing some specific examples of your local statistics and how they fare in these statistics. We have done this and they can be viewed at the following URLs:

<http://westagesc.com/An%20Exact%20Property%20Comparison.pdf>

http://westagesc.com/brochures_literature/Proof_That_staging_sells_%20MB.pdf

3. **No Hurry** – This may be the most frustrating objection. To overcome this objection you will need to do some digging into what their real motivation for selling really is.

“If it doesn’t sell in 3 months then we’ll stage it... “

A way to overcome this objection might be:

“Did you know that the opportunity to get the best possible price and most interested buyers is in the first few weeks of listing? This means that if you wait until after you’ve exhausted this opportunity, while we may be able to improve your selling odds, you will have already lost valuable time on market, probably have already taken a price reduction and lost your best possible buyers. Doesn’t it make more sense to put your best foot forward from the beginning, creating the best environment for a quick sale and maximum offers? “

“I’ve got a showing this weekend, let’s see how it goes and if it doesn’t sell then I’ll think about staging... “

A way to overcome this objection might be:

“Since you have a buyer this weekend, wouldn’t you like to increase your odds of a sale rather than just a showing? By not staging prior to showings, you are actually requiring more showings than you would normally need if staging had been done first. Even if you do receive an offer from the showing this weekend, it will likely be lower than it would be had the home been staged. Statistics show that staged properties sell for more money than unstaged properties. Wouldn’t you like to increase your odds of receiving an offer this weekend?”

What you really may need to discover with this objection is if the questions is really about time or money? Do they have all the time in the world to sell or are they trying to save the money and not stage? Many times what you will uncover is that an objection on ‘no hurry’ is often really an objection in ‘no money’ and then you will want to refer back to those objections and be sure to use their motivations to showcase why staging is vital to the sale of their property.

4. **No Desire** – Typically this comes down to misinformation or lack of education. The seller or agent simply doesn't understand what we do or how staging works....

“My agent said that I don't need to stage...”

A way to overcome this objection may be:

“Unfortunately we occasionally hear this from agents. I believe it stems from the agent not being aware of the value of staging at any price point and any occupancy status. Many think staging is just for (occupied/vacant) homes or homes over a certain price point. Let me assure you that staging is effective for virtually every home on the market. My goal as a staging professional is to help you get the most money for your home as possible in the shortest amount of time possible. Is this your goal also?”

“This house is not the right kind of house to stage (too small, too large, too inexpensive, too expensive, etc)...”

A way to overcome this objection may be:

“I can understand why you think this. The staging industry is so new that many simply don't know that staging works for virtually any property. The fact of the matter is that statistics show when a home is properly prepared for market, it often sells in less than half the time as its non-stated competition and for more money. After staging we are able to showcase the features and benefits of the home while minimizing the negatives. This helps buyers connect with your property. Does selling in less time and at a higher sale price by helping buyers connect with your home meet with your goals in selling your home?”

Just as with most of the categories, finding the seller's motivation is really the name of the game. You must enlist them to be on your side. You have to ask questions and get them agreeing with your way of thinking.

5. **No Trust** – This usually comes when you are an unknown entity. Once you have an established relationship with an agent, this will not be an objection with their clients. You will reap the benefit of their trust level with their clients.

“We would like to interview other stagers (or get other quotes)...”

A way to overcome this objection might be:

“Great! I’m glad to hear that you are doing your homework. Can you tell me what you will use to make your final decision – price or quality of work?”

This is when you will need to go back to the ‘no money’ objections and show why your quality is worth your fees. By showing that a lower budget may be lower for a reason and showcasing what you can do for your client with the budget you are offering and why it is the optimal budget for their needs and return on investment, you may still be able to close this deal here.

If, of course, you are likely to be the one with lower fees then you will want to showcase what you provide for your services. Be sure to help the client understand how you will stack up against the competition they are likely to interview and see if you can’t still close the deal here. If they do in fact decide to entertain other offers, you need to set up a time to follow up and have the opportunity to be with them again to work on closing this sale.

“The home will sell if it is priced correctly. I don’t need staging...”

I know we’ve all heard this one and it is so very frustrating. This is simply a lack of education or poor ‘old school’ thoughts. Here you will need to pull out the motivation card and likely fall into the ‘no money’ overcoming objection answers.

A way to overcome this objection might be:

“While this is true, if you do not choose to stage you may be leaving thousands of dollars of equity on the table. By making a small investment in staging, statistics show that you will

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actually typically receive higher offers and in the end, net a higher amount at closing. My goal as your professional stager is to make sure that any money you spend with me you receive back in higher offers or less time on market. After closing, my clients have often said that they feel they ended up in a stronger negotiating position and ended up making more money than had they not staged. A month from now, where would you like to be, considering reducing your price again to get an interested buyer or negotiating an offer?"

I've given you some objections for some of the most common staging objections. Of course if you don't understand what motivates your clients, then you may try to overcome objections from the wrong angle. Let's talk about how motivation effects the selling and closing process.

4.0 Understanding Motivations

If you really want to overcome your client's objectives and help them help themselves, you will first need to understand why your client is selling. Unfortunately real estate is not always what it seems and not all sellers are willing sellers. Many sellers are selling because they can no longer afford their home, perhaps they can no longer manage their home or maybe they are moving. If any of these are the cases, their motivation, and your arguments will be very different than if they are moving because they would like a larger home or just simply want to move to a different community.

Let's look at how some of the previous objections may change based on these different scenarios....

"If it doesn't sell in 3 months, then we will stage..."

In our previous response, we asked, *"Doesn't it make more sense to put your best foot forward from the beginning, creating the best environment for a quick sale and maximum offers?"*

But if their motivation is to upsize, then maybe our question doesn't really get them on our side. We asked if they wanted a quick sale and maximum offer. Sure, they probably want a maximum offer, but do they care about a quick sale? Maybe... but it might take a little more motivation to get them to move forward. What if we asked instead, *"Since you really want to move to that larger home before the baby comes, doesn't it make sense that we create the best environment for a quick and profitable sale from the beginning?"*

See, here we are reminding them that they do in fact have a timeline. They do not want to take forever and they do not have all the time in the world to make this transaction happen.

Some of the more difficult clients tend to be those that don't actually want to move. They don't want to stage because they don't want to let go of their home. Still, there is a sign in their yard and it IS for sale. Your job (of helping them meet their goals) is to help remind them that they are in fact selling and that you want them to be able to leave with as much dignity and with as little pain as possible.

Short Sales/Imminent Foreclosures – Sellers don't have much money. This is why they are losing their homes and moving. Take this opportunity to remind them that staging can reduce time on the market significantly. This will give the opportunity to keep foreclosure from happening, or getting the highest possible offer to make it easier for the bank to agree to a short sale – letting them out of the difficult situation they are in.

Medical Reasons – Sometimes the work becomes too much for a homeowner and they have no choice but to sell. Perhaps they've decided to move into a senior community or with family members. This is a great opportunity to remind them how much easier life will be when the house finally sells. Get them excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. Try to keep them thinking forward, not back. We don't want this to be sad, we want this to be the beginning of their new life.

Job Transfer – A new job may be exciting and even if it comes with a pay increase (although that is not always the case either), leaving the family home may be quite difficult for some families. This is when you may have to remind them that if the transfer is imminent that they may end up with a split family (one member in one town, one member at home still) or they may end up with the property vacant and paying two mortgages. By getting them to understand what the alternatives may be if the home does not sell right away is one way to help them understand the importance of taking care of staging from the beginning.

One should also not underestimate the power of reminding a client of the amount of work that goes into the packing process after an offer has been accepted, particularly if they will be doing the work themselves. I often remind my clients, after an offer has been accepted they usually have less than 30 days to pack and clean the entire home and find another home to move into. This suddenly helps them become aware of the enormity of the situation. I then remind them that their job will be a lot easier if we can get much of it packed and stored prior to listing. This way they will have less maintenance before showings and packing up will be easier when the offer comes. My favorite line is often, **“You are selling your home, wouldn't now be a good time to begin packing?”**

Once you understand their motivations, you may be able to determine what is really behind their objections... occasionally though you will have to do a little more probing and find out what they aren't saying. Too often clients will mask an objection with another objection. It often looks something like this....

“I know that staging is effective for some sellers, but honestly, our home is priced really well, we’ve already done a lot of packing and we are getting lots of showings. I just don’t see the point in spending more money. I’m confident we’ll get an offer soon.”

Did you catch all of the objections in that statement? Let’s analyze them one by one...

- 1) “staging is effective for some sellers” – implied statement is ‘but not home’
- 2) “our home is priced well” – staging doesn’t work, price is king
- 3) “we’ve already done a lot of packing” – well, certainly we don’t need *your* help, we’ve got this under control
- 4) “we are getting a lot of showings already” – staging is unimportant, eventually the price will win someone over
- 5) “I don’t see the point in spending more money” – no money, don’t trust it works
- 6) “I’m confident we’ll get an offer soon.” – again, staging doesn’t work.

Do you see all the work you’ve got to do to overcome these objections? This is a common scenario. They aren’t always easy or cut and dry. Often they throw these blanket statements out to simply shut you down so you’ll close your date book and walk away – saving them money, time and effort on something they frankly don’t think works anyway.

Wait! You aren’t giving up that easy right? Did you find out their motivation? Do you know what they aren’t saying? That might look something like this....

“I’m getting ready to transfer to a new job and if this house doesn’t sell soon then I’m going to have to take another price reduction and then pay two mortgages. I’m already losing money on the house and I just can’t afford staging at this point.”

Did you hear that in what they said? What if you knew that the fear of two mortgage payments was really their REAL OBJECTION? They’ve already started packing (because they are transferring soon), they are getting lots of showings but no one is biting and now they are

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worried about reducing the price of the home and paying for two mortgages – they are really afraid they simply can't afford you on top of all of that.

A possible response might be:

“Mr. & Mrs. Seller, I understand what you are saying. You have already done a lot of work preparing your home and now you are getting ready to transfer out of town. If the house doesn't sell soon then you will have to make two mortgage payments on top of everything else and you just don't want to spend any more money at this point. You are getting showings, so you feel the home is priced well and yet you aren't getting offers. What this usually means is that potential buyers are not connecting with your property. You have a couple of choices, you can wait and see how things go – putting you one step closer to another price reduction, or paying for an empty home or we can go ahead and stage the home now. If we stage now, I'm confident we'll be able to help buyers connect with your property and we'll be able to meet your timeline for selling your home. This way a month from now you can be busy with trying to locate your new home rather than worried about how much of a price reduction you need to make in order to not have to pay multiple mortgage payments. Which sounds better to you?”

Finally you've addressed what was actually holding them back... Can you see how this approach is more effective than trying to address each of the objections they ran off for you? Had you simply tried to overcome each of these objections, you still would not have reached the heart of the issue. Understanding what is motivating your client to sell is a powerful tool.

Again, remember this isn't about manipulating the client. This is about helping them reach their ultimate goal. In this case that goal is selling their home before they leave for their job transfer and maximizing their return on investment at the same time.

5.0 Steps to Overcoming the Objection

As we just discussed, sales is a process. It will help you become more successful if you can break the process into smaller bites and worry about each step as it comes along. Don't put the cart before the horse – rather take things step by step for ultimate success.

Step 1 – Listen!

I'm sure you've heard the saying, "God gave us two ears and one mouth – use them accordingly." There is no truer place for this saying than in the world of sales. If you listen to your clients you will be able to not only understand their motivation, but their fears, desires and needs as well.

Let them do the talking! Your goal at this stage of the game is to get them talking. This is not when you are giving your sales pitch.

Don't interrupt them. Use your best manners and let them get it all out. Don't sit there thinking of your hourly pay, your schedule for tomorrow or even how to overcome the objections that they are undoubtedly already giving you. Again, your job here is to be quiet and listen!

Don't try to discount their feelings or opinions. Yes, you may completely disagree with them. This is not the time for confrontation or belittling. Remember, you get more flies with honey than vinegar. If they have a wrong opinion of something, it is better to educate them on how things really should be – or how they are, while making them feel validated, or letting them know that others once thought the same way too.

Be focused on their needs and not yours. At the beginning of this process I told you that while you need to be goal oriented in your business and that includes your sales call, when you are working with your clients you are always in this for their best interests. By meeting their needs and goals you will meet yours. This is the way a symbiotic business works. If instead, you are more concerned with "getting the deal" you will find that you are always in need of new clients. I personally would rather begin relationships and spend more time cultivating those, spending more time working on the things that make me money (staging) rather than the sales process itself.

Step 2– Find their motivation

We just discussed this at length, but as I'm sure you can see, understanding the client's motivation for moving is a total necessity for maximum success. If you don't understand this first step your process will be very time consuming, difficult and sometimes downright impossible. You will find yourself moving in circles.

Step 3 – Give your pitch

This is when, using what you've just learned, you are able to let them know what you think is best for them. (again, not what is best for your sales goal) Let them know the why's. Don't just say to pack up and remove things, let them know why and how this affects buyers. Help them understand the process. Don't make this "do as I say". You need to see the seller as an ally. You need them to want to be excited about the process.

After you've given the pitch, then you are ready to ask for the sale. If you've done everything perfectly you might get lucky and get the sale right here. Even if you have done everything perfectly, most of the time you will find that an objection is waiting for you.

Step 3 – Clarify the Objection

You just listened to them, found their motivation and gave your sales pitch. They gave you an objection. Now you need to make sure that you understood the objection. Say it back to them.

"So what I hear you saying is that you just aren't sure that staging will really help sell your home. If the home were listed for more, you would consider it, but since your home is only \$150,000, you feel the cost of staging is simply more than the value you will receive – you won't see a return on your investment. Is that correct?"

If it is, then you know what your objection is. If it's not, then get them to repeat or clarify their objection. Repeat it back to them until you are sure what it is that you are working with here.

Step 4 – Quantify and get a commitment

This is when the fun really can begin. This is when you begin enlisting them in the game.

“So, Mr. & Mrs. Seller, if I could show you how you would be able to not only get back the money you spent, but get a tidy return on that investment, even on a home at your price point, would you be willing to move forward today?”

If the answer is “YES” Then proceed to the next step

If the answer is “NO” ... You have not uncovered their real objection. Chances are they are giving you another one right now. Go back to step 1. That’s right. You are back at the beginning.

Step 5 – Overcome their objection

You’ve just receive a “YES”! This is fantastic. They’ve agreed to do what you have recommended IF you can show what you’ve just said you can show... Effectively, you are back to giving your pitch. Now though, you have the ammunition to close this deal.

After you’ve overcome their objection, test the waters. Make sure that you’ve answered their questions. Have you met their needs and goals? If you think you have then proceed to Step 6 – closing the sale.

6.0 Closing the Sale

This should be the easy part now. Here is the important thing though... After you have answered their objections and satisfied their needs, ask for the sale... then

BE QUIET! SHUT UP, ZIP IT!

Do not say another word until after they speak. Whoever utters the next words usually loses. If that is you, you have just lost this sale. If it is them, they will do one of two things....

- 1) They will say yes! Woo hoo... close this transaction.
- 2) They will give you another objection. Guess what? You are back to step 1.

For some unknown reason this is the hardest part of the transaction for many sales people. What often happens is that in this quiet moment, you are deciding what objection they may come back with. You are lining them up in your head, ready to knock them out one after the other. What they are doing is trying to figure out where they are going to get the money, or what they will do with the cats while you stage the home.

Now you've decided that the quiet is killing you and you say something really profound like, 'I know this process seems like a lot of work, or even overwhelming, but when we are done, you'll be packed and ready to move when the offer comes in.' That's a pretty benign statement, right? Except that they hadn't thought it was overwhelming and now suddenly they are thinking, "You know what, this is overwhelming. I might need some time to think about this first."

That's right – you just gave them another objection, when all they were trying to do was put together the semantics of the situation! This is why you need to keep your mouth closed. Let them think. Let them say the next words.

If they offer you another objection, just go back through the steps. How long will this process last? It will last until you either close the sale or have exhausted all options and now realize that this transaction just won't happen. It's OK. It happens – to the best of us.

Overcoming Objections to Increase Your Income

There are a few things you MUST NEVER DO!

- NEVER put down your client's objections or belittle them
- NEVER argue with the client
- NEVER pretend to know something unless you really do. It is always better to say that something is beyond your scope than to promise to do more than you are capable of doing.
- NEVER avoid the objection
- NEVER lie or misrepresent products/services
- NEVER overpromise

If you learn to work this process, you will find that your closing ratio goes up dramatically. You will never close 100% of all of your deals, but the more you can close, the easier it becomes. Become a master closer and watch your business grow exponentially!