

Nurturing Leads

Looking at four possible outcomes of a sales call



STORY BY DAN STALP | PHOTO BY KENNY JOHNSON

Q. *How do you nurture a lead along when the prospect is not ready to buy yet? What tips do you recommend? Bill Brelsford, president, Rebar Business Builders*

A. Bill, I really appreciate your using the word “nurture” in your question. One of our Sandler Rules is: The three most important words in professional selling is nurture, nurture, nurture!

Most sales people feel pressure to push, prod, convince and cajole their prospects into doing something.

In essence, they are transferring this pressure to the prospect. At that point, the prospect attempts to transfer it back to the sales person through objections, criticism, not returning phone calls, etc.

The first order of business in answering your question is to determine if they plan to buy at all. There are four possible outcomes of every sales call. They are:

- ▶ YES
- ▶ NO
- ▶ THINK IT OVER
- ▶ CLEAR FUTURE

Of the above three, the only one we don’t think is good for you or the prospect is “think it over.” But, let’s talk about all four independently.

“Yes” means we are signing the agreement, money is transferring hands, and the check clears.

“No” means you are both clear you are not going to be doing business

together. Of course, “no” doesn’t mean forever, but it does mean for a period of time. This allows you and the prospect to redirect your time toward something more meaningful.

We do a lot of work with sales professionals to help them become more comfortable with the word “no.” No is rarely personal and it’s clear. Again – this is a good thing.

A “think it over” is someone who is neutral at best and can’t seem to “pull the trigger” (yes or no) for whatever reason. More often than not, a “think it over” is a “no” wrapped in sheep’s clothing. Because the sales professional is uncomfortable with no, the ultimate outcome lingers on.

A “clear future” is something you both agree needs to happen before you can work with each other. But once this takes place, it’s “game on.”

For example, let’s pretend you sell a piece of equipment that sorts paper products once they are cut. In the process of talking to the prospect, you discover the machine that cuts

Have a question for Dan?

- ▶ dstalp@sandler.com
- ▶ [linkedin.com/in/danstalp](https://www.linkedin.com/in/danstalp)
- ▶ 913-451-1760, x101



WEBSITE

CONNECT

until they can fix or replace the cutting machine. This is a “clear future.”

Based on your question of how to nurture the sales process along, the “clear future” prospects are the ones we want to communicate with and will spend most of our time on. That’s assuming we are getting “yes” or “no” — and we are not accepting “think it overs.”

So, the “clear future” prospect and you agree that once this cutting machine is replaced, your new sorting machine will replace the old one.

This is where we nurture the prospect through what we can be doing in the meantime, so once the cutting machine is replaced, our new sorting machine will replace the old one.

“A CLEAR FUTURE IS SOMETHING YOU BOTH AGREE NEEDS TO HAPPEN BEFORE YOU CAN WORK WITH EACH OTHER.”

the product is causing part of the sorting problem. What happens now?

You may both agree it doesn’t make sense to implement your new sorting machine

Now, you and the prospect are working on things together in harmony, rather than independently, and in many cases against each other. **KCB**