Closing Sales Is Easy, Once You Know How

By Tom Hopkins
Closing Sales Is Easy, Once You Know How

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Why is Tom Hopkins uniquely qualified to teach you how to sell?

Tom Hopkins wasn’t born to wealth and privilege. He was an average student and began his work life in construction. By the age of 19, he was married with a child on the way and trying to find a better way to support his young family. Since he wasn’t afraid of meeting new people and was known to be somewhat talkative, someone suggested he ‘try’ selling.

After several attempts, but he passed his real estate license exam. Tom’s first six months in sales was anything but successful. He made only one sale. He was down to his last $150 in savings when a man came into his office promoting a 3-day sales training seminar with J. Douglas Edwards, The Father of American Salesmanship. At that point in time, Tom didn’t know that selling could be learned in a classroom. And, he had never heard of “closing.”

Not only did Tom discover that selling was a learned skill, he was so inspired by that first seminar that he became an avid student. He applied everything he learned and began developing his own sales strategies. By the age of 27, he was a millionaire salesperson...setting records that remained unbroken until this century.

Tom Hopkins has been teaching his proven-effective selling strategies and communication skills to sales pros around the world for over 30 years. He understands both sides of the selling equation...your fears and those of potential clients. Let him help you communicate with the people you encounter in business situations so they feel confident about making buying decisions.

For maximum benefit read this informative content a minimum of six times. Then, apply the strategies it contains. Enjoy!
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Closing Sales Is Easy, Once You Know How

In the selling profession, a closed sale creates the winning score. It’s the bottom line, the name of the game, the point of it all.

You might already know plenty of techniques for prospecting, meeting new people, qualifying, presenting, overcoming objections, and so on. But, if you can't close, you're like a football team that can't sustain a drive long enough to score. It does you no good to play the whole game in your own territory and never get across the goal line.

If you don't love the closing process now, start falling in love with it because this is where the money is.

**Effective sales trainers and managers will tell you to follow your A.B.C.s:**

*Always Be Closing!*

True professionals are closing all of the time. They close for names. They close for appointments, visits or meetings. They close on earning trust...on getting down to business. They close on their own credibility and competence. They are constantly trying test closes, and they can move smoothly into their final closing sequence any time they notice a buying sign.

In this special report, we’ll cover some of the most effective strategies I’ve ever used (and taught) to close sales. If you have never tried them, please do. They can make a world of difference in the results you’re getting.
None of these ideas are all that unusual. They’re not radically different from how most people behave on a day-to-day basis. It’s the *when* and *how* of using them that makes them (and you) winners.

Perhaps you’ve heard the old saying, “It’s not what you say that matters. It’s how you say it.” How you speak to potential clients can and will truly make a difference in your level of success in sales.

And the concept of *when to say it* is just as important. Many untrained salespeople get so wrapped up in their selling processes that if the potential client decides to invest before they're through presenting, they won't let it happen. For some reason that’s beyond my understanding, they feel compelled to finish their presentations and will often talk the client out of the sale.

How silly is that?

**To think you have to complete your sales process from A to Z without leaving out J, P, or X is counter-productive.**

The key to success in selling is to be flexible. Of course, never plan to take shortcuts, but be prepared to hop a few fences if your potential clients are moving along faster than you expected.

Some people get sold quickly. If you keep talking instead of getting the final agreement, you might just
un-sell them. More talk has the potential to trigger more objections. When the prospects are ready with their decision to go ahead, stop talking and start filling out your paperwork!

**The single most critical instruction in selling**

This very next tactic I'm going to cover is critical. I'm going to give you the eight most important words in the art of closing. These are the most powerful words spoken on the complex, demanding, and well-paid art of closing. Here they are:

**Whenever you ask a closing question, shut up!**

The important words are “shut up.” That is why my mentor, the late J. Douglas Edwards used to shout them at his audiences. I was sitting in the front row at his sales training seminar the first time I heard this. I was already jumpy from the excitement of the program. When Doug shouted "SHUT UP,” I dove for cover. That memory is deeply etched into my mind, along with those words.

Those eight words were the most important element in turning my disastrous sales career into the record-breaking success it soon became. The first time after that training that I tried to ask a closing question and then keep quiet, I was prepared for the prospect's reaction. I expected them to stay silent.

What I hadn't prepared for was the intensity of my own feelings: The silence felt like wet sand being piled on my chest. My insides were churning, I had to bite the inside of my lip, and concentrate on remaining as still as possible. I was acutely aware of every nerve ending in my body. Finally, the client did decide to invest and I never again dreaded that awful silence after asking a closing question.
Why is it so important to keep quiet?

The first person who speaks after the closing question has been posed owns the product. If you speak first, you (or your company) still own the product. If the clients speak, they’re either going to say “yes” or “no.”

If they say “yes,” whoopee!

If they say “no,” they’ll likely say something you can grab hold of...another talking point that, once covered, allows you to try another closing attempt.

So, keep quiet and don’t risk destroying the buying emotions you’ve worked so hard to build during your presentation. That is one area where average salespeople lose and winners win.

Let’s say, for example, that the prospects hesitate for a few moments, wondering when they should take delivery. The salesperson becomes uncomfortable and assumes that they are questioning the investment. He blurts out that he’ll give them another 20% off the total investment.

If money wasn't an issue before, it just became one. Not only has the salesperson broken the spell of the decision-making moment, he’s put a serious dent in his credibility with the clients. Now, they will start doubting whether or not the salesperson has their best interests in mind; whether they got the best offer; whether the salesperson was being honest with them and will very likely make no decision today. They may even decide to look for someone else to buy from. Wow! All that because the salesperson couldn’t sit quietly for 30 to 40 seconds.
The average salesperson can't wait more than ten seconds after asking a closing question to say something else.

If "Mrs. Jones" hasn't answered by then, they'll say something like, *Well, we can talk about that later,* and go on talking, unaware that they have just destroyed the emotions they’ve been building to ever since they first made contact with Mrs. Jones. They’ve broken the spell of the moment of closing.

And it's probably not just the one close that is destroyed. Mrs. Jones can certainly keep quiet for a few moments—almost all undecided buyers can. If you're true Champion material, you will learn to sit there quietly all afternoon, if you have to. It takes concentration, but it rarely lasts longer than 30 to 40 seconds.

Having the skill, courage, and concentration to sit still and be silent for at least, half a minute is the single, most vital, skill there is in selling. Practice this until you get a feel for how long 30 seconds is.

Use the second hand on your watch, a countdown timer on your microwave oven, a stopwatch. Just sit still and feel what 30 seconds of doing and saying nothing feels like. Then, do it with your eyes closed. For some it seems even longer when there’s no visual stimulation. For others, it seems shorter. The point is to get the feel of it and be comfortable with it. Then it won't be so nerve-wracking when big money is riding on how calm and quiet you remain for 30 seconds in a real closing situation.
Technical Tips for Closing Sales

Later I’ll give you some test closes and some major closes. But first, here are some small but important technical tips about closing sales:

1. **Always have your closing materials with you.** Keep a stash of closing forms in lots of places, so they’ll always be handy: your brief case, health club or golf club locker, car trunk, your home and, of course, your office.

   Keep at least three working pens handy as well. Talk about destroying a moment. How competent will your clients think you are if the pen you hand them doesn’t work or runs out of ink as they approve the paperwork?

2. **Work clean.** Always use crisp new forms when paperwork is required. If you process orders through a computer, be certain the machine is clean and relatively “ding-free.” Also keep your computer screen clutter free. In sales “organized” equates to “professional.”

3. **Get your closing materials out early.** If you wait until your presentation is in full swing and you’re moving into the closing sequence, the prospects are sure to get their defenses up when you switch gears into closing mode. By having your materials at hand during your entire time with the client, the transition can be made much more smoothly.

4. **Find figures with finesse – with a calculator.** Why? Because people are more like-
ly to believe readouts than figures written out with a ballpoint pen. Also, because the most dan-
gerous time in the closing sequence is when you’re doing any kind of writing or calculating. Si-
lence can cause the potential client to become anxious—especially when you’re calculating their
total, initial or monthly investment for your product or service. Champion salespeople know this.
So they become so familiar with their paperwork that they can accurately fill it out while chit-
chatting.

5. **Close with casual confidence** . . . and don’t change your speed of delivery or style when you
start closing. Don’t let yourself tense up as you move into the close; your prospects will tense up,
too – and, could very possibly change their minds.

6. **Use the planned pause** . If you feel the potential client’s mind is wandering, simply take a long
pause in the middle of a sentence. He or she will think you’ve lost your place or something. It
doesn’t matter what they think, though. What matters is that their attention is back on the matter
at hand. You can’t close people if you can’t hold their attention.

7. **Use test or trial closes** . These little gems will increase your closing ratio by leaps and bounds.

    Read the next section for an in-depth look at them.

**Test Closes**

These are special closing questions. They’re asked before the final closing question is
posed. When answered, a test or trial close will show you whether or not the prospect has
reached a high enough level of interest to make a final decision.
If they’re not ready, you haven’t wasted a closing attempt on them or made them feel uncomfortable. Once the closing question is posed, if they’re not ready to proceed, you have to backtrack, cover or re-iterate key points and build their emotions once again. If they respond positively to the test close, you’ve lost nothing and can move forward.

The example I like to use when explaining test closes is going to the beach. If you don’t know the water temperature, you’re likely to walk up to the water’s edge and test it with your toes before jumping in. That’s what test-closing allows you to do—test the potential clients’ temperature about owning your product or service before you jump into asking them for a final decision.

Here are three test questions to demonstrate the test closing strategy:

**Test Close #1—The alternate advance test close.**

Ask your potential clients an either/or question—one we teach as an alternate of choice or alternate advance question. Either answer responded to positively means they’re ready to go ahead.

Example: “Mr. Shealy, would you rather invest five percent or ten initially?”

When he says, “five percent,” he has indicated that he’s already made the decision to own it. It’s time to move onto the paperwork!

Here’s another example: “Helen, would you prefer to have your electronic bank transfers made on the 10th or the 15th?” When Helen chooses the when of making her monthly investments in your service, she’s told you she’s ready to own.
In either case above, if the client hesitated or came out and said they weren't ready to make a decision yet, that’s okay, too. Now, you know where you stand in the sales process. You need to find out what’s holding them back and cover those points or details before attempting to close the sale.

**Test Close #2—The porcupine test close.**

This involves answering a potential client’s question with another question that would need to be answered if they owned the product.

When they ask, “Does that system come with the speakers pictured on the brochure?” don’t just answer “yes.” If you do and they would prefer different speakers, you’ve just put a dent in the potential for a closed sale. If you answer “no” and they start thinking they’ll have to pay extra for speakers—another potential dent in the sale.

So, to avoid getting all dinged up, find out why they’ve asked their question. “Are the speakers pictured the ones you’d like to have?” Now, if their answer is “yes,” you can move onto the paperwork or computer entry of transaction details.

If their answer is “no,” you need to help them determine the right speakers for their needs before attempting to close the sale. Either way, you’ve passed the ‘test’ without jumping to the close too soon and making them feel uncomfortable.

**Test Close #3—The erroneous-conclusion test close.**

This is a strategy where you state something in error on purpose and if the client corrects you, they are interested enough to move ahead. If they don’t correct you, they’re unlikely to make a buying decision today.
Here’s how it works: As a sales Champion, you’ll listen all the way through your presentation for anything your potential clients say that may be useful for an erroneous-conclusion test close. This might be related to something like the delivery date or a color option for the product.

As an example, let’s say you’re selling home furnishings. During the demonstration the wife reminds her husband, “Honey, your mother’s coming on the tenth. If we find what we want today, we ought to get it before then.”

Later you’ll use this in your test close, like so:

You: “I can see you’re pretty excited about this design. Now, you said your mother’s coming on the fifteenth, right?”

Prospect: “No, on the tenth.”

You: “So about the eighth would be the best delivery date?”

Prospect: “Yes.”

You: “Let me make a note of that.”

And you insert the date on your order form. Now, you’ve smoothly moved onto the paperwork and can easily fill out the rest of the details. You can use the erroneous-conclusion test close on color, size – on almost anything. Just make the error and let the clients correct you. Then write down the corrected information – and they are on their way to ownership and you’re closing ratios are improving!
Power Closes for Aspiring Champions

A close is just a way to ask for the order, their signature or the money. The key is to ask. Never, ever let a client leave your presence, whether it’s in person or over the phone, without at least asking one time for them to make a buying decision. It doesn’t matter whether they’re “buying” an appointment, something sent to them via email, or a product or service. Always, always, always ask.

Too many untrained salespeople could end up doing very well in this business if they would just learn how to ask for the order—the sale. All too often potential clients who are somewhat interested in a product or service just need to be asked to make a decision in order to go ahead. If you don’t ask, they don’t think you care enough to sell. How sad is that?

If I could give you one close that would work every time, this report would be worth a million dollars to you. But I can’t.

There isn’t and never will be one close that works every time.

That’s why you must learn several closes. You have to know more ways to get your clients to say “yes” than they know to say “no.” If you don’t, you won’t succeed in this business.

Most of today’s top pros that I know tell me that they typically close five times before getting a final approval from their clients. That’s the same number I found most common when I was selling real estate over 30 years ago. So, doesn’t it make sense that you have to know at least five closes in order to achieve some sort of success level in sales?
I’ll give you six here for good measure. Learn and be prepared to use every one of them.

1. **The basic oral close.** This is used primarily in two areas: 1) retail and 2) industrial/commercial/governmental sales. In retail, it’s as simple as “Would you like to take care of this by check, cash or credit card?”

When you’ve defined the needs you can fill in commercial or governmental sales use this question: “By the way, what purchase order number will be assigned to this requisition?” If they tell you they don’t know, smile and say, “What’s the best way to find out?”

It really can be that simple.

2. **The basic written close** (also known as the “let me make a note of that” close). You got a quick view of this in the erroneous-conclusion test close, and it’s equally effective as a final close.

If you’re closing in person, I suggest you carry a leather binder for a letter or legal-size pad; and have an order form there under a separator to protect it. This allows you to flip to it instantly when the time is right. If you take your orders via computer entry, have that document or web site be only a click away.

My favorite way to work with this close is by incorporating the porcupine technique. Here is a super-simple example:

Client: “Does this dining table come in walnut?”
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Tom: “Is walnut the finish that works best with the rest of your decor?”

Client: “Yes, that’s the finish I prefer.”

Tom: “Let me make a note of that.”

Then write the information on the order form or enter it into the computer.

Now, with this close you must be prepared for the client to object. And you must answer that objection in exactly the words assigned to me in this dialogue:

Client: “Hey, are you putting that on the order form? You’re getting ahead of yourself. I’m not ready to give you an order yet.”

Tom: “Mrs. Prospect, I like to organize my thoughts to keep everything in the proper perspective. I do that on the paperwork so I don’t forget anything.” If it suits your product or service, add: “particularly anything that could cost you time or money.”

Then lead in to the next close.

Throughout your presentation, keep filling out that order form. By the time you’ve gone through the preliminaries it’s going to be almost entirely filled out. In many cases, the forward motion you develop by completing the form will be enough to get it approved.
Never forget that once your pen touches your order form, you’re halfway there. If you can make a note of the exact model, color and delivery date they want, you’ve turned the last corner.

**3. The sharp angle close.** This carries the porcupine technique to a higher level of effectiveness. Instead of just answering a question with a question, as in the standard porcupine, you answer with a sharp-angled question. If they reply in the way their original question suggests they will, they’ve bought it.

Here’s an example:

Prospect: “*If we decided to go with your product, we’d have to take delivery by June 13th. Could you handle that?*”

Most salespeople would jump in, say yes, and have nothing. The client could walk right out the door believing they could come back later and still take delivery on the 13th—giving them time to shop around elsewhere. Here’s how a professional takes advantage of this opportunity:

Champion: “*If I could guarantee delivery by June 13th, are you prepared to approve the paperwork today?*”

The Champion will, of course, now shut up until the client answers. Now the feeling the client has is that they can only get guaranteed delivery by the 13th if they place their order now. The salesperson didn’t say that was the case, but the sharp angle close allows you to imply urgency.
In order to use the sharp-angle close, you have to wait for the client to make a demand or express a desire that you can meet. Delivery date is a good base for this close; credit terms, installation assistance and color choice are others. Almost any benefit that people state that they want can, in fact, be sharp-angled.

4. **The secondary question close.** With this technique, you pose the major decision (to buy or not to buy) with a question, and then without pausing add another question that’s an alternate advance involvement question. An involvement question is one that they will have to answer after they own the product or begin the service. That’s a long explanation, so I’ll give you an example:

“As I see it, Frank, the only decision we have to make today is how soon you’ll start enjoying the increased profits the JLG Lift will help you earn through increased efficiency. By the way, are you going to use it in your main plant or in your new warehouse?”

When Frank answers the second question about where he’s going to use the lift, he’s answering the main question, too. If he says, “in the main plant,” he’s telling you he’s taking ownership of the lift.

Please note that there is no pause between posing the major decision and asking the secondary question. That’s essential to the effective use of this technique. Note also that an alternate advance is any question that indicates a choice of answers, all of which confirm that they’re going ahead; an involvement question is one that requires them to make ownership decisions.
Now, you don’t really care whether Frank uses your JLG Lift in the plant or warehouse, do you? But, when he thinks about where he’ll use it, he’s thinking about some of the choices he’ll have when he owns your product. That gives it double-barreled sales power. He sees it in use...in his facility. He mentally owns it!

5. The “I’ll think it over” close. There must be someone running all over the country giving seminars on how to put off buying decisions, because potential clients all seem to use the same procrastinating phrases: “I’ll think it over;” “We want to sleep on it;” “Why don’t you come back tomorrow/Next week/After the holidays and we’ll let you know.”

But will they think it over? Of course not. As soon as you leave the scene they’ll forget it. It’s a brush off...a stall...a way of getting the opportunity to shop around some more and put off making a decision for another day.

So here’s what the Champion does when they play the old I’ll-think-it-over” number:

a) Agree with them. “That’s fine, Harry. Obviously you wouldn’t take your time thinking it over unless you were seriously interested, would you?”

“Oh, you bet,” Harry will say encouragingly.
b) Confirm the fact that they’re going to think it over. Say, “Since you’re that interested, can I assume you’ll give it very careful consideration?”

Those last three words are spoken slowly, with just a touch of emphasis. Of course Harry’s answer will be yes. Why not? He thinks you’re giving up. At which point, you say, “Just to clarify my thinking, what is it that you wanted to think over, is it the integrity of my company?” (Notice that those two sentences are run together; that’s essential – the last one has to be delivered without a pause.)

Harry will naturally say, “Oh, of course not, your company is great. I didn’t mean to suggest anything like that.”

You go on. “Is it my personal integrity then?”

He’s appalled: “No, of course not.”

“Is it the lift’s capability to handle your loads?”

“No, no,” he says, “we agreed on that. It’s fine.”

Is it this? You go on. Is it that? “No, no,” says Harry…because you’re careful to use points that he has already agreed upon. In fact, what you’re doing is summarizing the benefits you know are important to him, and through his answers, getting him to tell you how good the product is for his needs.

Finally you get to the last objection: the real one. The money. Of course, it’s always the
money, but if you ask about it straight out, before going through the is-it-this routine, they’ll always deny it. At this point, however, they’ll admit it.

“Then is it the investment involved in owning the lift?” you say.

“Yeah, that’s it,” says Harry. “It just costs more than I expected.”

And what have you accomplished in getting this admission? Quite a lot. You’ve broken through the think-it-over-and-forget-it routine. Now you’re down to the real objection – money which you will handle by moving into…

6. The reduction to the ridiculous close. In one form or another, “it costs too much” is the most common of all objections. And when we’re hit with it, we salespeople tend to look at the total investment, the total amount. That’s big trouble. Instead, go for the difference between the investment and what they’d like it to be…and then reduce it to the ridiculous. Here’s how:

a) Find out how much “too much” is. Let’s say you’re selling office copiers for which the total investment is $8,000. The potential client Ruby, the purchasing agent, says that’s too much. But the money challenge isn’t $8,000, is it? They never expected to get a copier for free. So ask in a warm and pleasant way, “Today most things do seem to cost too much. Can you tell me about how much ‘too much’ you feel it is?”
“Well, we were planning to budget about $6,000 for a copier.”

You now know the crucial figure. It’s not $10,000 but $2,000, and you’re ready to…

b) Reduce it to the ridiculous. Let’s work through our example on office copiers. Your prospect is Ruby Wellman, and she has just given you that “difference” figure of $2,000.

“So really,” you can say, “we’re talking about $2,000, aren’t we? Let’s put this into proper perspective. Here.”

Hand her your calculator and go on. “Let’s say that you own our Superpow copier. Do you think you’d keep it for about five years?”

“That’s about right,” says Ruby.

“Okay, divide $2,000 by five years, and that’s $400 a year, right? Divide that by 50 weeks a year, and that’s $8 a week, right? And you keep the plant working seven days a week, so divide by seven, what do we get? $1.14 a day?”

She does the work on the calculator. “That’s what it comes out to, I guess.”

“Ruby,” you smile, “won’t the time saving features of this machine…all the sophisticated features you liked when you were working it…won’t this machine make more profit for your company than that $1.14-a-day cost?”
“Well, if you put it that way,” she says, “yes.”

“Well, if you put it that way,” she says, “yes.”

“Then we’ve agreed that it doesn’t really cost too much, does it?” you say. “By the way, which delivery date would best suit your time schedule – the first or the fifteenth?”

And maybe you’re thinking something like, “Wow, I couldn’t do that.”

Why not?

Money is an objection that you will encounter as long as you are in sales. Can you reach your full potential in this business without learning how to cope with it?

Of course not.

So adapt this technique to your offering. Work out the bugs by rehearsing the words with a friend. Get the numbers down and use it. Your sales results will show a startling difference.

If you really have a hang-up with any of these closes, decide it’s okay to fail with them – but it’s not okay to avoid learning and using them. Make a commitment to try each one ten times and see how you do. If you don’t take action with these strategies within 24 hours, it’s likely that you never will and what you’ve found interesting here will do you no good. Application is the key.

I know you’ll have some success because I did. And so have millions of other sales professionals around the world that I’ve trained.
Then try each one ten more times, and you’ll have a lot of success.

Try each one a third set of ten times, and you’ll be flying high, eating at finer restaurants, and ordering custom-made clothes (if that’s what you want as a goal). Or, you’ll be paying off your home sooner than expected, donating more to charity and traveling more frequently. It’s up to you what you do with your higher earnings. It was up to me to show you how to get them.

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