



# Creating Customer Value

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... a primary dedication to  
client success

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## When it's done right... it's not like selling at all

There are few things more irritating than telemarketers, particularly when they catch us at dinner, or in the middle of drying after a shower or when we have our hands full with some hot dish that we are trying to get to the dinner table. And there is nothing more annoying than a sales person who is pushing, manipulating, cajoling or pressuring us into a purchase commitment we're not ready to make.

Research done by Huthwaite, Inc. and published in the book "Spin Selling" reveals that: a) prospects, by a significant margin, are less likely to buy when they are subject to closing techniques and gimmicks, b) customers who actually buy as a result of being "closed" are both less likely to re-buy and less satisfied with their purchase a few days after the purchase and c) the actual win rate when closing techniques are used is less than when not used.

Both our personal experience and empirical research data tells us that selling in the old-styles of "closing" and "driving the volume" is inefficient, ineffective and not conducive to customer loyalty and satisfaction.

It seems at times, that companies using these techniques, quite frankly don't really care a hoot about the customer or

client at all. What's most important seems to be that the sales team meet targeted bookings levels—at all costs. And that message comes through clearly to the buyer.

Buyers can be made to feel like nothing more than an irritating obstacle standing between the salesperson and his commission. Customer satisfaction? Well, that's something for the service department to worry about not the sales person. He's got to close the deal.

The truth is that professional, quality, profitable and meaningful sales is not about closing at all costs. (I can feel sales managers all over the country cringing at this heresy as I write it).

So if its not about "driving a sale to closure, what is it about? *Quite simply, professional quality selling is the activity of assisting a customer in finding the best solution to his problem or need.*

Our firm, QMP™ Associates, Inc., does a lot of sales training through its training arm The QMP™ Institute. We suggest, (more to make the point than with any real hope that someone will actually take us up on the suggestion), that our clients stop calling it a "sales" process and the department "the sales department" and begin to call it "client problem solving" .

We'll agree that the suggestion makes for a name that's hard to handle, difficult to fit in a small box on an organization chart or print on a business card. It's probably too cumbersome and confusing to change the name of the organization, so let's simply change the perspective.

Let's ask ourselves, what the short and long term implications would be of insisting that the primary function and objective of the sales organization was customer problem solving rather than closing deals at all cost?

Would customers be more or less satisfied with their purchase and the experience of dealing with your company?

Would customers be more or less likely to consider your company when the time came for a repurchase?

Would customers rate your firm higher or lower in customer service?

In a survey of customer satisfaction regarding the performance, service and functionality of the product, would your company rate high or low?

Would you be more or less likely to achieve a non-price-based customer decision?

What about the impact on company reputation?



**Customer problem solving is key to creating customer value**

"But", you say, "my boss would fire me if I didn't constantly drive every opportunity to a close with every trick at my disposal" Take a moment, and restate that last sentence, substituting the words "to solve my customer's problem" instead of "every opportunity to a close". How does it sound?

Truth is, if you don't consciously think of the primary objective of selling as finding creative ways to solve the customer problem, not only will you not drive opportunities to closure expeditiously, you won't have that customer as a re-purchase candidate, a long term source of revenue, a reference account or, and we often forget this important factor, a source of information about customer needs for the next generation of product.

Sales is provides optimal value to the company and to the customer when it facilitates the customer buying process by helping him solve his problem. The more you provide customer value through sales, the more value the market provides to your company. That's how to improve closing.

*QMP™ Associates is a Portland, OR based market strategy, business development and sales process consulting firm whose mission is to improve the economic market value of small to mid-size business-to-business firms through accelerated revenue, profit and cash flow. QMP™ Associates can be reached at 503-318-2696 or on the web at [qmp@qmpassociates.com](mailto:qmp@qmpassociates.com)*