

You Get What You Get!

The back cover of the magazine featured an image of an unhappy-looking salesman, carrying his belongings out of the office in a box. “Good News,” the headline read, “he closed the deal. Bad news, he gave all the profit away.”

The ad continued: “Come to the Karrass Negotiating Seminar, because you don’t get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate.”

Obstacle vs. Opportunity

I’ve seen Karrass ads in hundreds of airline magazines over the years. This was a new version, but the tag line is always the same. And it’s always true. The ability to negotiate effectively goes a long way toward determining whether you “win” or “lose” in business.

Let’s think about winning vs. losing, though. As the ad points out, giving away all of your profit is not a win. And while “all” may not be an everyday occurrence, it’s been my experience that most printing sales negotiations do end up with the seller giving up more than the buyer. So how do we change that? Let’s start with a change in attitude. Let’s start thinking of price objections, not as obstacles, but rather as opportunities. The buyer says: “I don’t want to pay your price.” This is your opportunity to say: “I understand, but let me tell you why you should!”

An Important Observation

Here’s an observation. I’ve found that most people will pay what they have to in order to get what they want, or what they need. Here’s the complicating factor, most people don’t know how much it actually does cost to get what they want or need. They do know how to look at two numbers and recognize which one is lower, though, and that’s the price they generally want to pay.

Let me put that another way. No one wants to pay more than they have to for anything, so the lower price is always the more desirable price. It may not be the *best* price, though, and that’s where your opportunity lies, because *best* in this context should be defined as the lowest price that will ensure that the buyer gets what he/she wants or needs. Quality has a role in that definition, as does reliability and dependability, and the solution to a problem, the relief for pain or the insurance against risk.

Here’s a key point, though. There has to be a problem, or pain, or risk, to make this negotiation strategy work. One of my clients recently defended his price by telling his prospect about his company’s reputation for quality. The prospect replied: “I have no problem with the quality I’m getting now.”

This might have been a whole different story if a needs/wants assessment had determined that quality was in fact a problem. I’ve never been to a Karrass seminar, but I’ll bet they teach how important it is to ask all the right questions in advance of quoting a price. Don’t stop at “how many?” and “when do you need them?” If you ever have to negotiate, you also want to know “what could go wrong?”

A Different Story

That knowledge carried the day for another client recently. When her prospect told her that she was almost \$100 higher than his current printer (on a \$650 job), she was able to say: “That doesn’t surprise me. I rarely find that I’m the lowest price on any quote. But do you remember those questions I asked you about the quality problems you’ve been having? I took all of that into account when I calculated my price, and the solution to that problem is contained in my price. This is what it costs, I think, to make sure you get what you want.”

“I get it,” the prospect said. “You’re telling me – quite nicely – that I bought cheap and I got what I paid for. OK, can you get it to me by Friday?”

That’s a real win, right?