



5 Ways Your Sales Team Is Killing Deals

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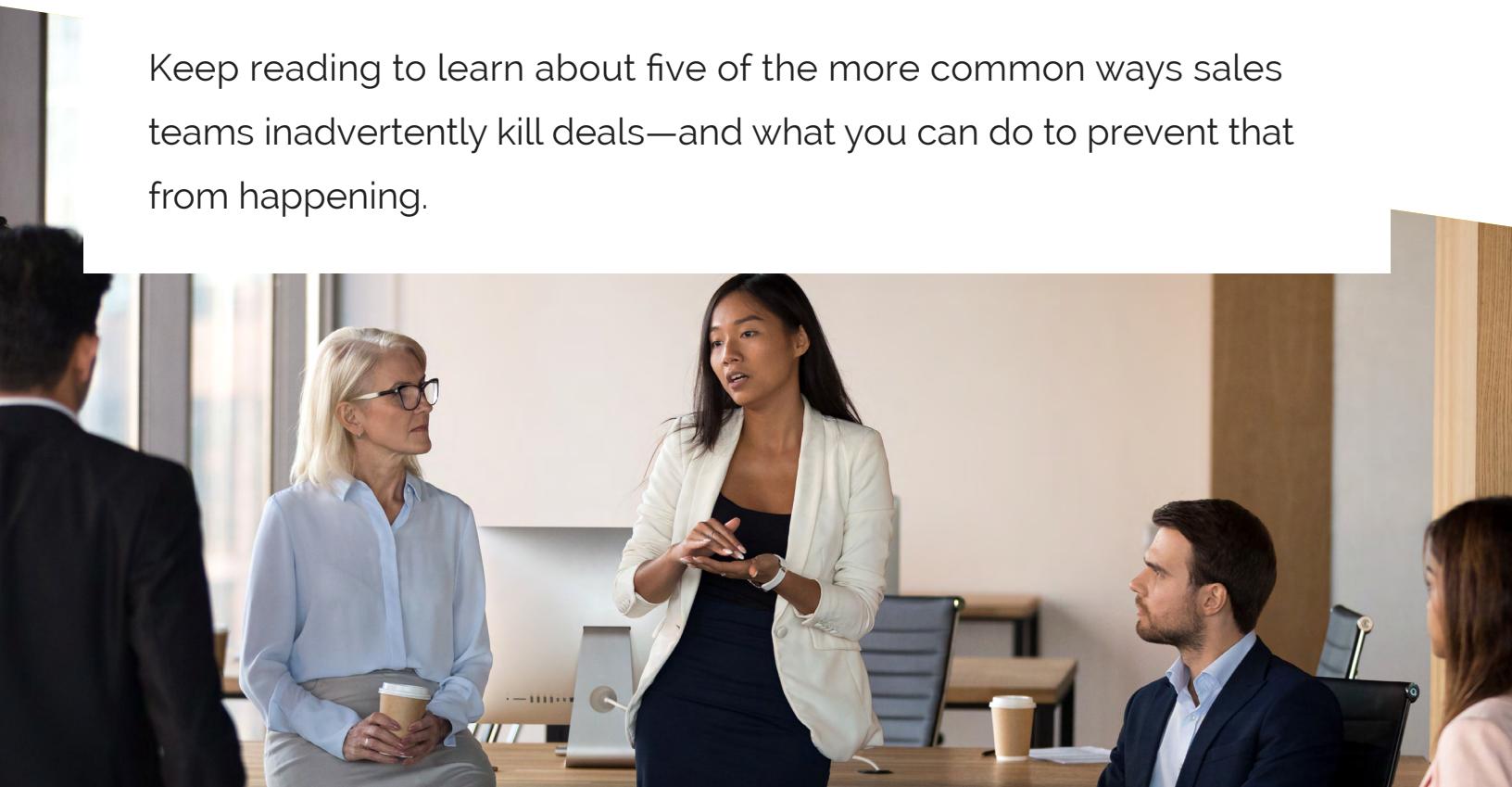


Introduction

Even the best salesperson in the world isn't able to close every counterpart they bring to the table. But they're still able to close many more deals than the average sales professional. On one hand, this is because they understand and have implemented effective sales tactics and strategies. On the other, it's also because they understand what *bad* sales tactics look like—and they work tirelessly to avoid them when they're at the table.

If your sales team is killing many deals, it might not be for a lack of effort. It might just be because they are using methods that turn counterparts away in all kinds of scenarios.

Keep reading to learn about five of the more common ways sales teams inadvertently kill deals—and what you can do to prevent that from happening.





Mistake No. 1: Assuming the Sale

Do you want to sell to great clients who are fun to work with and share ideas with you? Or do you want to sell to clients who are really difficult and cause all kinds of problems for which they blame you?

Many salespeople have a tendency to assume that a sale should be made every time they're at the table. If you approach sales with this attitude, it's only a matter of time before you make a deal with the wrong person. When that happens, you'll end up entering into an agreement with a party that is ultimately only going to cause you more grief than you can stomach. This notion is even more compounded when there are any long-term components involved in your deal—like ongoing support services.

Instead of assuming the sale, take a different approach to each engagement. We recommend bringing an “elitist” attitude to the table every time. Before you move the conversation forward, you should qualify whether the other part is *worthy* of buying what you have to sell. If they’re not worthy—maybe you can tell right off the bat that your counterpart is going to be a very demanding person to work with—it’s a sign that it’s time to walk away.

How to qualify a prospect

Let's face it: When you're sitting at the table with someone, chances are they are leaning on three or four other vendors already. They might be talking to you simply because they are trying to milk you for information. As a salesperson, you need to ask yourself whether it's worth your time to give them said information.

Remember, no deal is always better than a bad deal. And though it's not a sin to not make a deal, it *is* a sin to spend a great deal of time only to end up not making a deal. When you qualify prospects early on in the process, you reduce the chances that you will end up committing that sin.



Qualifying a prospect is a two-step process that looks something like this:

- ▶ Lead with an Accusation Audit™ to identify and defuse the negative sentiments likely harbored by the other side
- ▶ Follow up with a Proof of Life™ question to determine whether the deal is actually “alive” or whether it’s time for you to walk away

Here's what this looks like in action: *This might come across as direct, it might even make you uncomfortable, and you might be thinking that I'm impatient or in a hurry.* That's your Accusation Audit. Then continue with something like this: *You have many options when it comes to choosing where to get this product or service. Why are you considering doing business with us?* There's your Proof of Life.

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How the other side responds will give you all the information you need to figure out your next move. If they respond with something like this—*Well, isn't that your job?*—you can walk away because that's a telltale sign the individual has no intention of doing business with you.

The ideal response to your Proof of Life sounds something like this:
*Why do we want to do business with you? Well, you're the best.
You have a great track record, and your name keeps popping up when we're researching our options.*

When your counterpart essentially lays out your value proposition for you, the deal is pretty much done at that point.

Mistake No. 2: Becoming Too Forceful

Salespeople are highly motivated. When they close more deals, they get more money. Unfortunately, this tends to cause many of them to exude an approach of forcefulness, which scares would-be clients away. Because if there's one thing everyone hates, it's an overly pushy salesperson.

One of the biggest mistakes sales teams make is behaving too forcefully—and using *yes momentum* to put prospects in an agreeable mood, ostensibly to increase the chances they say yes when the ultimate ask is made. Anytime a salesperson says something like this—*Are you interested in lowering your car insurance bill?*—most of us feel dirty because we know that it's only a matter of time before we're going to be asked to reach into our wallets.



Sales teams use yes because they want approval and want to feel understood. But when you're pushing your value proposition and pushing people to say yes, you're ignoring empathy altogether—which crushes your chances of success, because empathy plays a critical role in effective sales processes (more on that later). This is why we teach our clients to leverage the power of [No-Oriented Questions™](#), which are questions designed to get the other side to say no. These questions are devised with empathy top of mind—if for no other reason than that all of us feel protected when we're able to say no.

The most successful salespeople position themselves as trusted advisors to their counterparts and clients. Instead of assuming the sale—or even worse, trying to force it—they take a curious stance. So be curious about *all* of the information regarding the sale. Your goal isn't to force a sale—it's to get the other side to trust you enough to the point that your words begin to influence their decisions.



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How do you get there? People trust those they feel understand them. Unfortunately, many salespeople fall into a trap in which they assume they need to educate their counterpart. Even though said counterpart has likely already made up their mind 75 percent of the way. When you approach every sale as if you have something to learn from your counterpart—and you ask a good deal of questions and use the right labels to feed into your curiosity—rapport and trust-based influence are right around the corner, and it's that much easier to close deals.



Mistake No. 3: Having the Wrong Mindset

Many sales teams kill deals because they go into each negotiation with the wrong mindset. If you approach the table thinking about how this conversation is going to feel like getting your teeth pulled and that it's going to make you miserable on the other side of it, that's pretty much exactly what will happen.

Your [mindset impacts all aspects of a negotiation](#)—from how you act and how you speak to how your counterpart acts and how they respond to your message. Though having the correct mindset can make your efforts easier, going into a negotiation with the wrong mindset can derail your efforts before you've even started.

Many salespeople go into negotiations with a fixed mindset. They've outlined the specific parameters of the deal, and they've also devised a plan for how they're going to get there. This is a suboptimal approach that makes it nearly impossible to make a deal outside of the terms you already have in mind. And who knows?

Maybe the other side is willing to do a deal that's twice as large as the one you have in mind. With a fixed mindset, you have no way of knowing.

On the other hand, if you go into a negotiation with a growth mindset and an open mind, the possibilities are endless. To illustrate, The Black Swan Group recently sold a brand-new, first-of-its-kind corporate training program to a client. The catch? We didn't even offer the product in our portfolio before we sat down at the table with them.



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By entering the negotiation with a growth mindset, we were able to keep all possibilities open—which ultimately ended with us creating a brand-new product.

How do you go about developing your mindset before a negotiation?

Follow this four-step process:

- 1.** Decide that you're going to change your approach
- 2.** Focus your determination by creating a specific plan of attack (e.g., "I'm going to use an Accusation Audit, Labels™, and Mirrors™ during this interaction")
- 3.** Understand that you're going to make mistakes and accept that fact
- 4.** Know that practice makes perfect—you probably won't knock it out of the park the first time, and you need to get your reps in

Mistake No. 4: Failing to Understand Whom They're Negotiating With

One of the main reasons sales teams fail is because negotiators don't take the time to properly figure out who's sitting across the table. They think that their approach will work just as effectively on whoever their counterpart happens to be, and they don't give much more thought to it than that.

This is an unwise approach because no two people are the same. However, though we are all unique individuals, all of us can be categorized as one of three different negotiator types:

1. **The Assertive**
2. **The Analyst**
3. **The Accommodator**

When salespeople are able to determine which type of negotiator their counterpart is, it becomes that much easier to engage them effectively. To help you identify what kind of negotiator type you're engaging with, here's a brief summary of each along with some tactics you can use against them.





The Assertive

Assertives are aggressive, honest, and direct. They love to win, confront issues head-on, and do everything they can to steer you toward what they perceive to be the “best” solution: theirs.

Because Assertives love to talk about what they want and why, Mirrors are a particularly useful tool against them. Summaries and paraphrasing work well here, too. When you summarize their stance thoroughly, the Assertive will give you a *that's right*—which is a prerequisite to any sort of deal with them.

If you've been talking to an Assertive for a while and they haven't said *that's right*, it's time to walk away and move on to the next person. Otherwise, you may end up committing the sin of spending too much time to not get a deal.



The Analyst

Analysts love information. They spend a great deal of time preparing and come to the table ready to ask a boatload of questions. Analysts consider themselves to be smart and pragmatic—which often comes across as cold and standoffish.

Because analysts believe that they have done their due diligence and have arrived at the best conclusion possible, it's virtually impossible to close them during the first conversation.

Labels are a good tool to use against Analysts because they enjoy having matter-of-fact conversations about the data they've collected. On the flip side, Analysts are turned off by questions, which they consider to be obstacles standing in the way of them and a deal. They've already done the research, so how could there be more questions? When negotiating with an Analyst, avoid questions whenever possible.



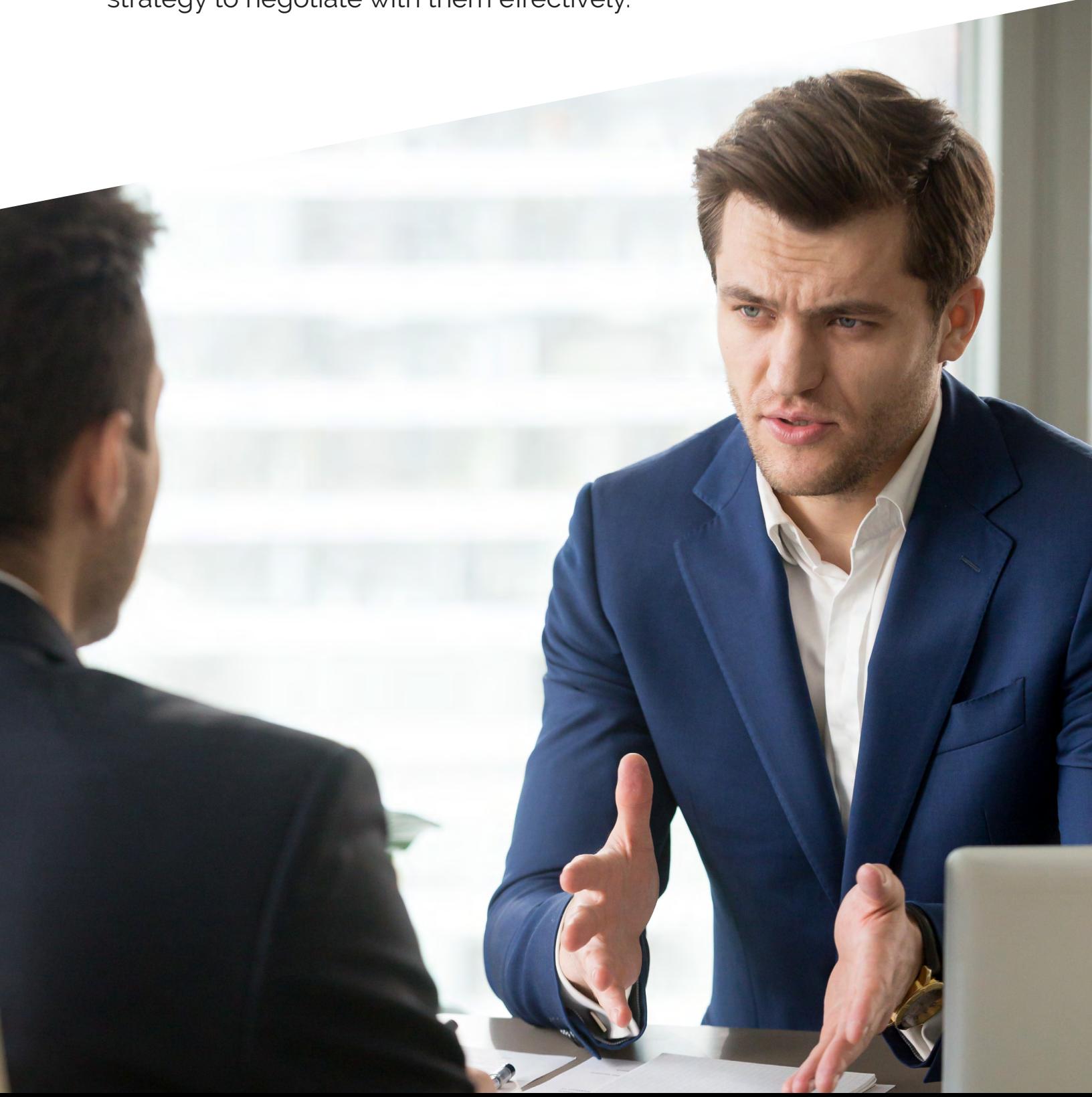
The Accommodator

Nothing pleases an Accommodator more than getting along with the person across the table. Accommodators are personable, cordial, and conversant. Oftentimes, these innate characteristics come across as being overly friendly or too conversational.

Because Accommodators care most about relationships, you're going to want to present the nicest version of yourself to try to get them to like you. Though we generally advise clients against common-ground conversations, they can actually work well on Accommodators, who tend to take interest in things like your son's basketball team and how nice the weather was last Tuesday.

Because they like to talk, you need to set aside more time than usual when you meet with Accommodators. Plan on being patient, and try to shorten your pitch as much as you can. Calibrated Questions™—which are *what*, *how*, and sometimes *why* questions—can be particularly helpful against Accommodators.

Bottom line? The faster you identify the negotiator type on the other side, the sooner you'll be able to adjust your strategy to negotiate with them effectively.

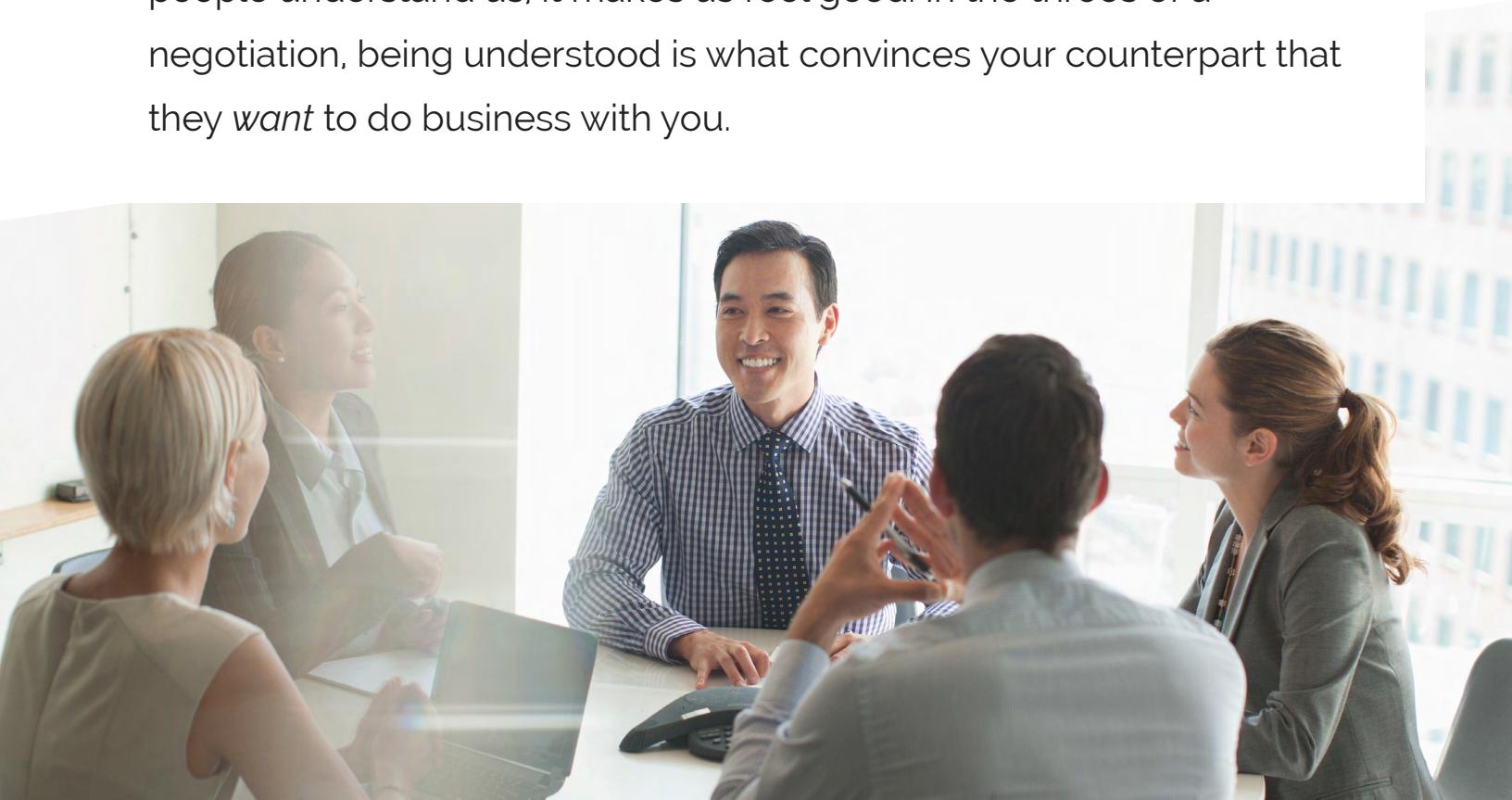


Mistake No. 5: Forgetting to Use Empathy Effectively

At the end of the day, people don't do business with you because they have to. They do business with you because they *want* to—because they *like* you.

How do you get someone to want to do business with you? It starts with recognizing your counterpart's perspective and seeing things from their lay of the land—and then making sure that they are aware you understand where they are coming from.

As humans, we all have an unending desire to be understood. When people understand us, it makes us feel good. In the throes of a negotiation, being understood is what convinces your counterpart that they *want* to do business with you.



Unfortunately, many negotiators let their ego and pride get in the way of thoroughly understanding the other side's perspective. You can avoid that fate by giving up your ego and understanding that the other side doesn't have to agree with you. In fact, their position doesn't even need to make sense! You just need to be able to articulate their perspective, which helps develop rapport and the trust-based influence that's needed to close deals without splitting the difference.

At Black Swan, we teach our clients to use [Tactical Empathy™](#) to knowingly and intentionally influence their counterparts' emotions and put them in a much more receptive position to make deals. When you use Tactical Empathy, you are articulating the other side's perspective so thoroughly that all they can say is this: *that's right*. It's like you're reading their mind.



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New to Tactical Empathy?

Follow this [three-part process](#) to get started:

- 1.** Channel the late-night FM DJ voice, using a soothing tone while crisply enunciating your words
- 2.** Don't disagree with anything they say—even if you don't agree with anything they say
- 3.** Use Labels to verbalize unspoken feelings and ensure the other side feels heard

Avoiding These Mistakes Is Only Half the Battle!

Successful negotiators understand that they can never assume a sale. They work hard to ensure they don't come across as forceful, and they spend enough time before the beginning of each conversation to make sure their mindset is in a proper place.



**Successful negotiators understand
that they can never assume a sale.**

Instead of treating each negotiation the same way, they also understand the differences between the three negotiator types and adjust their strategy depending on whom they're engaging.

On top of that, they use Tactical Empathy throughout the entire negotiation process to make sure that their counterpart knows, with certainty, that they are understood completely.

Though avoiding these five mistakes can improve your outcomes, it's also important to learn the tools and strategies your team should embrace every time they sit down at the table. That way, you get a two-pronged approach that will help your team get better results.





**When you're ready to continue your learning,
sign up for team training sessions today and see
why our clients are 20 percent more effective in their
negotiations after they've learned our methods.**

CONTACT US

