



Sales Coach Series

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Managing a lost sale

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The Dilemma

I've been working on an important bid to a customer but I've just lost the sale. Should I walk away?

The Coaching

In these circumstances it is not unheard of for a salesperson to never contact the customer again.

Instead of walking away, try to find out the rationale for the customer's decision. Make them feel comfortable that you are seeking their assistance as a means of improving the service you and your company offer. If you present your request for feedback in this way the customer is unlikely to refuse - particularly if you have enjoyed a good relationship.

Remember that most people do not like delivering bad news. The customer may also have had experience of salespeople becoming aggressive and so you will need to demonstrate that you are different. If the customer decides, of their own accord, to reverse the decision, fine, but don't force a 'showdown'.

Be aware, before the conversation, of why you may have lost the sale and the politics which may have occurred. A new customer may have been using you to put their incumbent supplier under pressure to perform. If you are the incumbent then you may have lost to a new supplier if you have failed to meet certain expectations or seem to have become complacent.

Demonstrating maturely that you are committed to working with the client despite this set-back will put you in a strong position next time. However, if you feel that you are not likely to resolve the issues - or that they were never serious about buying from you - then confidently walk away, leaving the door open behind you.