

## E-LESSON #22: Handling Objections

### GENERAL AGENDA



#### *WHY OBJECTIONS ARE OUR FRIENDS AND LOGICAL WAYS TO HANDLE THEM*

*By Paul Weyland*

Many broadcast salespeople become intimidated by clients because we don't feel comfortable with client objections. As we'll learn, most objections to broadcast advertising are the same. We'll look at those objections and how to answer them intelligently. Practice answering objections so that when you hear one, you know precisely what to say. And always remember that objections are good, not bad. We cannot close a sale if a client still has objections, however we can usually address the objections to the client's satisfaction. Most client objections come from ignorance. Our job is to ferret out the objection and educate the client correctly. For us, the objective is the objection.

As a new salesperson I was intimidated by objections. I still believed that "No," meant "NO". A "NO" from a client was as negative as the old NO from my parents. Consequently, I took "no's" very personally, until I got smarter. Gradually, I came to understand that objections are a good thing. If you don't have objections and answer them satisfactorily then you won't close the sale. I learned that when it comes to sales, objections are usually borne from ignorance. That means that when it comes to the selling process, "NO" doesn't necessarily mean "NO". Most of the time it simply means that I've got a little more work to do. If we do our jobs correctly, we might just see our clients go from "NO" to "No" to "no" to "maybe" to "possibly" to "YES".

Don't be intimidated by clients. They are nothing more than bags of skin, hair, guts, bones and blood...just like us. We can help them solve major problems. Instead of being intimidated, we must become more proactive with ways we can help them.

Remember that most local direct clients already have the perception that what we do for a living is complicated, confusing and expensive. If we don't get objections, we have no idea what the client is really thinking. If the client thinks that broadcast advertising is just a crapshoot then he sees no value in doing business with us. Clearly we do have value to clients. We represent thousands of potential customers for our clients. Our job is to fish out client objections so we can properly educate the client and close the sale. Educated clients buy more than uneducated clients and that's a fact.

### ***Most objections are relatively the same***

Most objections to media salespeople are relatively the same and, on occasion, you'll get something from way out in left field. The one element that the most familiar objections have in common is that, for the most part, they are borne out of ignorance. You simply have not yet properly educated the client about advertising and marketing. The onus is by and large on the salesperson, not the client.

Keep in mind that in a perfect world a successful business would look like an equilateral triangle or a pyramid. All three sides would be equal. On the left side you'd have product or service. On the right side you'd have sales force. And across the bottom you'd have advertising. However, most business triangles usually wind up looking more like a witches hat than an equilateral triangle. The side that says advertising is usually the "weakest link." Why? It's the most mysterious side. It's the hardest side to quantify. It's the hardest side to qualify. It's the side that most business people know the least about...and that's our fault.

Here are some common broadcast objections and some good ways to handle them.

### ***"Word of mouth is the best kind of advertising."***

"I couldn't agree with you more. Word of mouth is an excellent form of advertising. Radio and television advertising is CONTROLLED word of mouth. YOU control the words. This is important to understand, Mr. Client because there is GOOD word of mouth and sometimes there is BAD word of mouth. For example, if you go to a restaurant and get an okay meal, you might tell a couple of people. But if you go to a restaurant and get a BAD meal, who are you going to tell, then? EVERYBODY. All businesses make mistakes. One employee could destroy a fifty-year reputation. One of the reasons you must maintain a consistent advertising schedule is to help put out those little fires of insurrection that develop when somebody had a bad experience with your business. CONTROLLED word of mouth is like a layer of Thinsulate for your business. It's like insurance to help fight BAD word of mouth."

### ***"I tried it once and it didn't work."***

Have you ever heard the objection, "I tried radio or television and it didn't work?" Here's a "snippy" way to handle that objection. "Well, if you really believe that it doesn't work, then I guess you won't mind if I SPEND MY OWN MONEY and buy a campaign on our station next week advertising that you're going out of business, and everything in your store is now eighty five percent off!" But, that's the snippy way. Look...you need to teach your clients that **all media are good**. Newspaper is good. Billboards are good. Radio and television are good. The Yellow Pages are good. However, media

must be used correctly in order to work for the client. So, if a client says that your medium didn't work, then that's a statement of ignorance, not fact. If a client says that, you can be certain that one or two or sometimes even **all five** of the following things had to occur.

1. Wrong demographic. As surely as you're sitting there reading this lesson, some noodle-head at a news-talk station is selling a schedule to a guy who owns a skateboard shop. It could be that it's the skateboard shop owner's favorite station, so he thinks everybody listens to it. Well, it's illogical and it won't work.
2. Bad schedule. I believe in frequency when we run schedules. Own a day or own a daypart or own a program on your station, but by gosh, **own it**. ROS schedules are a product of ignorance and false and illogical beliefs. Look at it this way: Most radio and television stations run about a thousand spots a week. Running a fifteen-spot ROS schedule through a week would be terrible coverage. Imagine that one spot on your station equaled about a liter. And that there are about four liters in a gallon. If you ran that fifteen-spot ROS schedule on your station, that would be like pouring a bottle of fine champagne into three hundred gallons of water! You wouldn't taste very much champagne, would you? Agencies buy ROS because it looks efficient on a TAPSCAN report. But remember that agencies are not in the business of buying results for their clients. They are only interested in reaching an efficiency goal. As far as I'm concerned, efficiency and results for a client are two completely different things. Ten or fifteen spots per day or per week in a daypart, or running two spots in a nightly newscast or another program make much more sense to me. **Own the day or the daypart or the program**. Do it. Recommend it to your clients. It's the right thing. And it makes a lot more logical sense than ROS.
3. The third reason somebody would think that advertising on radio or television doesn't work is just plain bad creative. And in our business, it's usually pretty bad. You don't have to be a creative genius to know the difference between good and bad advertising. Just remember a few simple rules and keep an open mind.
  - Rule one: **Always begin with a headline**. A headline gets your attention. Get the attention of those people who will be in the market for your client's product or service from somebody this week. Use an emotion in that headline. For example, if I'm trying to get the attention of people who might be nervous and in the market for a new home security system, I'm going to use *FEAR*. For example, I might say, "Statistics show that most daytime burglaries occur during morning rush hour. How

do you know that, while you're stuck in traffic in the mornings, some CREEP isn't breaking into your house and stealing your stuff and maybe KICKING YOUR DOG?" If you live in a high-crime area, I'll bet that headline, laced with *FEAR*, would get your attention.

- Rule two: **Talk about product or service benefits and results** that your listener or viewer could relate to...in real language that people really speak...without using clichés and ad-speak. Use the 'Best Friend Test'...read the copy and if you wouldn't use those same words while talking to your best friend, they don't belong in your copy.
- Rule three: **Make the call to action crystal clear.** Don't disguise the address or the phone number. Make the *call to action* the very last thing in the copy.

Most radio and television creative is just horrible. We've turned into an industry of CRAPMASTERS. Eighty to ninety percent of the stuff we put on the air is infested with clichés. It's almost as though we all believed that radio and television spots are supposed to look and sound like spots. They're written in ad-speak. And that's a language that nobody really speaks...except in commercials. If commercials stand out...above the Craposphere...they will be much easier for people who are in the market for that product or service to see or hear the spot.

4. The fourth reason somebody would say that advertising doesn't work would be marketing problems. You can't put lipstick on a pig. If the client has marketing problems...let's say a poorly conceived or overpriced product or service...or a hard-to-get product or service...or it's poorly packaged...or undercapitalized...hey, the best advertising in the world can't dress up marketing problems.
5. Reason number five that a client would say that radio or television advertising didn't work is because of mismanaged client expectations about advertising results. Think about all of the bonus spots we've given away because we never were on the same page as the client about **realistic results** from the advertising campaign. I mean, do you, with every single new direct client, ask what his or her average sale and gross profit margin are? I'll bet you don't. If you do, then *good for you* because if you don't have that information, you're blind. If the client believes, out of ignorance, that because of his campaign on your station that he should have eighty people lined up at his door...and you didn't manage his expectations by calculating a reasonable return on investment...then shame on you. Let's say the client believes, for no real reason, that because he's advertising with you he should have at

least fifty new clients in a couple of days. However, in reality, based on his average sale and profit margin...combined with the amount of money he's spending with you...he really only needed six new clients to break even. But he didn't know that and that's your fault.

So again, the classic objection, *"I tried it once and it didn't work."* Your job as a detective is to educate the client that all media are good. Then go through your list of the five potential problems: Did the client run on the wrong station or the wrong program for his demographic? Did the client run a weak schedule? Look at the creative. Was it written by a crapmaster? No headline...filled with clichés that nobody hears...call to action...phone number or address mentioned only once...and then obscured with a cliché slogan at the end? Does the client have marketing problems? Is it really hard to get his product or service, even if you try? Is his phone always busy? Is the product or service something ridiculous that nobody would really want? Is it overpriced? Poorly packaged? Or were his expectations about results mismanaged from the beginning? Is it possible that the client had more than one of these problems at the same time? I've actually met clients who had all five of these problems at the same time. No wonder they think that radio or television advertising don't work.

You'll have to ferret out the problem, educate the client correctly and, with your good logic, advice and a little patience maybe you'll be able to get the client back on the air with a solid and reasonable campaign.

***"We've got more business than we can handle."***

"That's GREAT. When are you expanding?" is one thing you could say. More often though, you're beating your head against the wall. Sometimes clients really do have more business than they can handle. That means it's time to go that client's direct competitor and tell them, "So-and-So has more business than he can handle and he's quit advertising. That means he's having trouble handling the customers that he has. Now would be a great time to start branding and capturing mind share among our listeners/viewers. You'll have less competition on our station right now. I wonder how many of your competitor's excess clientele we could convert to your business this year."

**“You’re not number one.”**

Here’s another common objection from clients who have been trained to believe your station has no value, unless you’re number one. Clearly this is another misconception borne of ignorance and here’s a great way to deflect that misconception. “You know, you’re not number one in your industry, either. And I don’t have to be number one in mine. I still represent thousands of consumers who will buy your product/service from *somebody* this week. How difficult are you making it for them to buy from you, when you don’t teach them **who** you are, **what** you do and **how** to get in touch with you?”

**“I’ve seen your ratings and you don’t have any listeners/viewers.”**

Ah...so, your competitor has taken it upon himself to educate your client about radio or television ratings information and slam your station in the process. This is a no-no with direct clients. YOU should NEVER bad-mouth another radio station or another medium. You’ll need to draw out the objection. Obviously, your station has an audience. Listen carefully to the client and find out EXACTLY what the client has heard. Then, in a calm way, explain that, unfortunately, the salesperson at the other station is apparently misinformed. Build a case for the audience that you do have. Point out the strengths that your audience has and then get back to building value for your idea. Offer to provide the client with the names and phone numbers of other clients that you have had success with. This will usually get the ball rolling. Then, try to answer the objection the same way you would for, “You’re not number one.”

**“I only use the newspaper (or Yellow Pages).”**

The newspaper is a great medium. And always remember that **all media are good**. You’ll seldom get anywhere trying to sell an avid newspaper or Yellow Pages client on dropping that medium to give yours a shot. Obviously the client believes that the newspaper works and may be ignorant about the benefits your medium, which works just as well, could bring to his business. Here are some things you could say to begin the education process. “You use the newspaper (Yellow Pages)? That’s great, because I’m in the newspaper (Yellow Pages) advertising business as well. Mixing media is a logical idea and I’ll advertise your newspaper (Yellow Pages) ad on our (radio/television) station. You’ll get even better results by reminding our thousands of consumers to be sure and take a good look at your newspaper (Yellow Pages) ad. Your ad will stand out more when we tell our (listeners or viewers) where to find your ad and what it looks like.”

When a client tells you he only uses the newspaper or the Yellow Pages, remind him that a significant number of his competitors are also using the newspaper (Yellow Pages). “Mr. Client, the newspaper (Yellow Pages) is a great advertising medium. It’s a big lake with a lot of fish. But with your particular product or service category, wouldn’t you agree that the newspaper

(Yellow Pages) is a little oversaturated? It looks to me like every one of your competitors are fishing on the same lake. My lake also has thousands of fish in it, and we don't have ONE SINGLE advertiser from your product or service category fishing on our lake. Heck, right now, you'd have practically monopoly fishing on our lake.

You could point out that in the newspaper's own studies it was revealed that decreasing the size of an ad does not mean a proportionate decrease in people viewing that same ad. In other words, going from a full-page ad to a three-quarter-page ad is a more efficient way to use newspaper. And with a three-quarter-page ad, the page is actually more interesting because the paper will run a story in the remaining space. "The dollars you shave off that big ad would go a long way on our station in helping you to promote your event *and* the location of your newspaper ad."

There is a huge "HOLE" you should point out to your clients that buy big ads in the Yellow Pages. The problem is that most people flip through the Yellow Pages from back to front. That means that when they get to your client's category, they get to shop the smaller ads first.

***"I'm just not ready to do anything right now."***

"Let me think about it" is not a concluded negotiation. This vague statement could mean several things. One thing it definitely means is that your client is harboring hidden objections about your proposal. It could mean that they are just trying to blow you off and they don't know what else to say. Instead of just taking the statement at face value and saying, "Okay, but be sure and call me when you're ready," (the client will NEVER call you), try to find out what the *real objection* really is.

One thing I've discovered many, many times is that when the client says he's not ready to do anything RIGHT NOW, he means, "RIGHT NOW." That is to say, it's not logical to assume that just because you popped in for a visit in the middle of a month that the client has the budget to advertise with you RIGHT NOW. I've gotten buys by simply asking when the client would be ready. Hey, maybe they mean they'll have the budget two months from now. That's fine. Take the advance order now.

Or to bring out the client's real objection quickly, just say, "Mr. Client, we have thousands of potential customers out there who will buy what you're selling from *somebody* this week. Is there another reason why you wouldn't want to start educating them about **who** you are, **what** you do and **how** to get in touch with you immediately, so that they would have the option to do business with you, instead of with your competitors?"

***“I don’t like your format/programming/music.”***

This objection can be easily handled using this logic. “I’m glad you brought that up and I appreciate how you feel. But have you ever been fishing? Well, if you wanted to catch fish would you bait your hook with food you like to eat, or food that the fish like? I might not like everything on our station either, but thousands and thousands of other consumers obviously do. How difficult are you making it for them to buy from you when they don’t know **who** you are, **what** you do or **how** to get in touch with you?”

***“Your rates are too high.”***

This is a classic objection in any line of sales work. Find out exactly what the client means by “too high” in order to put things into perspective. Obviously, he doesn’t fully comprehend the value of your expertise in bringing customers to his business. Remember that the price is always the first objection when the client doesn’t understand the value you bring to his business. Did you show the client how to calculate return on investment? Based on his average sale and his gross profit margin, how many new customers must your campaign bring in, in order for the client to break even on what he’s spending with you? And, what is the value of one new customer to your client? A dentist for example, operates on a forty percent gross profit margin. His average sale is close to three hundred dollars. How long have you been going to the same dentist? One year? Two years? Longer? How often do you visit your dentist? Twice, or three times per year? Do others from your family use the same dentist? If someone moved into town and asked you to recommend a dentist, would you recommend yours? The value of one new customer to your dentist could be thousands of dollars over a few short years. How big is your total weekly audience? Doesn’t it seem logical that with a good spot and a logical schedule, that a percentage of your audience might be looking for a new dentist this week?

Automobile manufacturer Lexus claims that the value of one new customer to them is \$600,000. That is, if a person purchases a Lexus, they’re likely to buy another, maybe even another for a family member. And they’ll recommend the Lexus to their friends, extended family and business associates.

The value of one new customer to your client could be very significant. Your rate, in comparison, might look very insignificant based on what your station could ultimately do for that client.

***“The budget is already allocated.”***

You know, sometimes you just show up at the wrong time of the year. It might be possible to convince your client to “steal” some budget for you from another area, like sales or P.R. Or, you might be able to scare up some “free money” in the way of co-op money. Or, you might be able to steal some of the client’s other media budget. However, it is likely that you might have a

problem getting this client on the air this time. Many clients plan their advertising budgets in October or November for the following year. If you missed this year's opportunity to pitch for their business, make sure you get an appointment EARLY, in time to work for next year's budget.

***Don't waste too much time with contentious clients***

Remember what we said earlier? "The best thing about beating your head against the wall is that it feels so good when you stop." That means don't spend too much time with argumentative or rate-spoiled clients. There are too many other local direct clients in your signal coverage area, hundreds or thousands of them, who need to be educated about the value of advertising with your station. Rate-spoiled clients may never buy from you, even though you've answered every objection. If you sense that a relationship is going nowhere, fire the contentious client and move on!

*There is an on-line companion video provided with this lesson.*

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