



# Blind Spots in Sales

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Avoiding words, phrases, and behaviors that cause resistance

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# Business Warning Signs

## Can you discern the warning signs?

What if you could identify the early warning signs of a business problem? What if you could detect a sales situation going bad? What if you could give yourself video game like (neutral) feedback that was an instant indicator of possible problems lurking below the surface?



Google executives can predict a flu outbreak by the number of Internet searches for 'flu' and 'influenza.' Epidemiologists can now spot a flu outbreak one to two weeks faster than before Google.

Remember the rock band Van Halen? On tour, the band would show up with nine 18-wheelers full of gear. Because of the technical complexity, the band's standard contract for venues was thick and convoluted. It required the venue's stagehands to pay close attention the contract's details in order to properly prep for the band's arrival.

If the venue did not do their due diligence in reading the contract, it compromised Van Halens' ability to setup in time for the show. Furthermore, it put the show at risk for an electrical malfunction if the contract was not followed with precision.

In a stroke of genius, Van Halen's lead singer, David Lee Roth, embedded an obscure clause in the middle of the contract that became known as clause 126 and read something like this:



"There will be no brown M&Ms in the backstage area, upon pain of forfeiture of the show, with full compensation."



Upon arrival at the venue, Roth would walk backstage to check out the M&M bowl. If he saw any brown ones he knew the venue had not read the contract and it was very likely they were going to have a technical error. He would demand a line check of the entire production.

Without knowing it, the venue, by not reading the contract, operated with a huge blind spot completely unknown until Mr. Roth ordered a line check or payment.

What blind spots do you carry during your business transactions, sales approach or everyday communication that you don't know about? A blind spot is a belief or behavior that signals a red flag to the person with whom you are conversing. You most likely don't know about it and they can't explain it, but it hinders your success.

# Blind Spots

## 10 communication areas on which to focus

Here is a list of 10 blind spots. These are beliefs and behaviors to avoid in sales and business. The first eight are words or phrases. The final two are verbal behaviors traditionally taught as a 'best practice.'

1. Interested
2. Would
3. Just
4. Great
5. Thank you
6. To be honest
7. Need
8. Like
9. Multiple name usage
10. Rapport building



**Note:** in the business world, we are all salespeople. From the accountant to the department head, the currency of business is to get other people to act in a way that is self-serving.

Traditional selling is to manipulate, persuade, convince, or even stretch the truth in order to get the prospect, the accounting department, management, or the work force to buy, do, or behave in a way profitable to you.

This is not the most effective method of communicating. By eliminating the 10 blind spots in your communication system, you will have greater success, greater influence, and a deeper level of trust and respect.

## 1. Interested

"Interested" is a word that salespeople use when they don't want to hear 'no.' Interested is a word that prospects use when they don't want to say 'yes.' Salespeople often think 'interested' means 'maybe,' and are desperate enough to take that as a 'yes.' It's an avoidance technique combined with wishful thinking. There is no commitment in being interested.

When a prospect shops using the phrase "I'm interested in..." they are searching for information. You are the source for the information. There is no commitment when you

download your expertise. Upon completion of the download, they graciously thank you and armed with your information, they buy from your competitor.

The only greater source of information grabbing is a prospect who is "very interested" in your product. The counter measure to an interested party is to ask them what they want. Change the vernacular and you change the outcome.

## 2. Would

Would is filler that minimizes or softens a question or request for a commitment. It degrades the person speaking and lowers their self-respect. Compare the two questions:

*"Is that something you would like?"* versus *"Is that something you want?"*

Which of the two carries more meaning and commitment? Whether in a sales situation or working with others in the office, using filler words or attempting to be nice or timid at the expense of being direct, reduces the probability of clearly understanding what the other really wants.

Salespeople also use the word *might* in the same way they use would. Would and might come from a point of weakness and timidity.

Prospects buy because they trust and respect you, not because you are nice, timid, or non-threatening. When you respect yourself, your time, and you value your knowledge, it comes across with direct questions from a neutral space (attitude).

A prospect will quickly identify herself as a high probability person when you ask what they want and garner small commitments through the dialogue.

## 3. Just

"I just want to let you know..." or "just 15 minutes of your time..." What does the word 'just' imply? Just is another way of saying you want more than you are willing to admit. It's manipulative. It's sliding your foot in the door when they try to close it on you.

Just trivializes your communication in order to disarm the prospect or business contact. You minimize your product and service and lower your self-respect. The word just is almost addictive in nature. It slips into the dialogue like a thief in the night and does damage without awareness.

## 4. Thank you

While gratitude in a business situation is occasionally warranted, 'thank you' is one of those phrases most over-used, abused, and rendered meaningless by salespeople, receptionist, and business professionals. There is no need to thank prospects for their time and attention.

Repeatedly thanking prospects and customers implies a subservient, begging position, which will cause a loss of respect for you. Have you ever thanked a thank you? Next time, try saying ok. When gratitude is given, say, "*you're welcome.*"

Being grateful and gracious are appropriate behaviors when warranted, but expressing gratitude with the sole intent to convey politeness and to get someone to like you is manipulative.

When someone says "Thank you for the mortgage, the insurance policy, opening the door, taking out the trash, doing a kind deed, you respond, "You're welcome."

When the doctor performs a physical, does he thank you for the abuse? No! After the redness of embarrassment subsides and you put get dressed, you walk out and thank him as you pay the administrative assistant at the front desk.

## 5. Great

The prospect or customer says she wants to set an appointment to discuss business and you say "GREAT!" The prospect says he is in the market for your kind of product and you say "GREAT!" You sound as if you are desperate or perhaps have a warped sense of values.

Is it great because nobody ever says yes? A professional doing her job is not 'great' to her, it is routine.

Perfect is another version of great. Perfect implies no error, nothing could be better and there isn't another time that works as well. When setting a time for an appointment and the prospect suggests 2 PM, you respond perfect. Then they realize their cat is having surgery, so they suggest 1 PM and you respond with purr-fect. Did you mean perfecter?.

Far out or groovy are ok. Be frugal in usage, however.

## 6. To be honest...

Anytime somebody emphasizes his integrity or honesty, I question his integrity or his honesty. It's a red flag when a business professional toots his horn. When someone says, "to be honest with you" it marks a change in the conversation. In other words, what was he before he declared his honesty?

Such statements are unnecessary and are used for emphasis. There is no added value to the discussion, but there is an added concern that you are now persuading and trying to get your point across. That is seeking agreement and most people back away when being sold something.

## 7. Need

We live in a world of wants today, not needs. With all respect to Maslow, if need was the primary drive in nature, we wouldn't have MacDonald's, Dunkin Donuts, or Baskin Robbins. A needs-based survey or analysis is a system based on manipulation. People buy or act based upon their wants.

Imagine the Dunkin Donuts cashier asking the cop how many donuts he needs? Go up the teenager running the MacDonald's counter and toil over your decision using phrases like: "Umm, what do I need today? I'm very interested in the #3." Then you wait and look at the baffled teenager until a response comes forth.

What does that mean, what do I need today while shopping at MacDonald's? The next time you shop the golden arches, order your meal with, "I'm interested in the #3" as you look in a state of pondering at the illuminated menu overhead.

## 8. Like

Similar to the word interested, like carries no commitment. "*Is that something you'd like?*" A double hit, would and like sharing space in the same Blind Spot. Try this: "*Is that something you want?*" Any time you receive a commitment, you establish a reason for doing business.

What if the product being sold was a Time Share Condo? Is that something I like? Yes. Is it something I am interested in? Yes. Is it something I want? No. I can't afford it. Want implies action. It is a different level of commitment. You can eliminate wasted time by avoiding meaningless questions.

The next time a salesperson tries to close you, say "I like the red corvette on your sales floor with the price tag that exceeds my income" and wait for a response. Here are a few more:

"I like the Kenmore microwave more than the Samsung," or after test driving 3 cars and the salesperson tries to get a commitment out of you, you say: "I like the console in the mustang better than the one in the camaro, but I like the way the challenger cornered better than the mustang."

Whether in sales, management, marriage or parenting, give yourself permission to ask direct questions that elicit clarity when answering. Clarity is power.

## 9. Multiple name usage:

Dale Carnegie in his book *"How To Win Friends And Influence People"* pointed out that the most popular word in the English language is someone's name. Ok, but using it over and over again is using it in vain. Moses received similar counsel on Mt. Sinai. Repetitive use of your first name is phony to everyone but the person using your name in vain.

It's important to remember the person's name and it's appropriate to use it during a lengthy discussion or at the conclusion of a lengthy discussion when you say good-bye, such as: Good-bye Jack. However, using it at the beginning of each sentence is annoying:

Richard, as I mentioned...

Richard, when you look at...

Richard, there is another feature... etc. etc. etc.

I'm fond of my name, but not when used in space full of persuasion and manipulation.

## 10 Building Rapport

The phone rings, I answer, "hello, this is Richard." At the other end a very enthusiastic person says, "Hey Richard, how are you today!?" My triple layered force field immediately goes up, DEFCON 1, Red Alert, imminent sales attack. The next question is usually, "How's business?" or "How's the weather?"

Building rapport doesn't work and everyone knows what you're doing. When someone starts to build rapport with me I envision brown M&Ms spilling out of their pockets. They typically don't realize what they are doing, and they have been taught to sell this way.

Building rapport is manipulative and persuasive. Most people will practice avoidance behavior when you invade their space with manipulation and persuasion.

Our culture has trivialized the meaning of words. At work, with family or with friends, words carry meaning. Trust and respect is the currency to success and poison words erode or eliminate trust and respect and compromise the business environment.

Eliminating blind spots from your language is an important step to developing trust and respect and experiencing greater success in your relationships.

## Summary

It may seem that your communication vocabulary has been reduced by all of your favorite words, however, there are replacements for some. For example:

Change from: Is that something you're *interested in*" and "Is that something you *would like*?" to "Is that something you want?"

Great and perfect can be replaced with "ok" or "uh huh".

Thank you can usually be replaced with "you're welcome".

Need can be replaced with want.

You have permission to eliminate the word 'just' and eradicate the phrase 'to be honest'. You can also eliminate multiple name usage.

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