

The Tidal Wave Sale

In a sales interaction with a prospective client, I offered several solutions to his particular situation. I had asked him several questions, and upon determining his needs, presented a variety of different answers. I told him about the corporate programs I deliver, recommended one of my public workshops, suggested that he register for my newsletter, and asked him to complete a questionnaire that would help identify where he and his team could improve. When I hung up the phone, it dawned on me that I may have presented too many solutions, too quickly. Sadly, I had fallen prey to using the tidal wave sales approach (please don't chastise me and tell me I'm insensitive – it has nothing to do with recent world events).

A tidal wave sale happens when you overwhelm your customer during the sales process. In other words, you bowl them over with too much information or too many ideas in an effort to close the sale. Here is another example:

A homeowner I know met with an interior designer for some consultation on improving the appearance of her home. During their first meeting, the designer suggested several different options and ideas and at the end of the meeting asked for a deposit so she could begin the job. Although the ideas and solutions that were presented sounded good, the homeowner was hesitant to do business with that particular designer because he felt that the designer was rushing the sales process. The homeowner needed time to digest and consider the ideas before making a final decision. The designer had used the tidal wave sales approach.

Many sales professionals, particularly SME's (Subject Matter Experts) fall prey to using this sales approach. They truly want to help their clients and prospect but tend to get carried away. As a result, they offer all the solutions they can think of, believing they are helping their customer. In fact, they actually make it more challenging for their customer to make a decision.

I remember when my wife and I bought a new bed. We visited four or five stores and in each store we were told that we should look for something different in a mattress. The sales people told us all about the features of the beds they sold and by the end of the day we were completely confused and didn't know what factors we should consider in our purchase. As a result, price became the motivating factor in our decision.

Most sales people don't recognize it when they use this particular approach. They become so accustomed to telling people everything about their product or service, forgetting that too much information can actually be detrimental.

We need to be careful how much information we give people, especially in preliminary conversations and particularly if our product is highly technical in nature. Keep your answers brief and to the point. Avoid giving too much information, too many answers, or too many solutions.