

What Does “NO” Really Mean?

Scott Sorrell / CEO, Sales Adrenaline

Anyone who has been in professional sales for more than about 30 minutes has heard the answer NO. No, I’m not interested. No, not right now. No, thank you. No, never. **NO NO NO!!**

Those who are ultimately successful in sales are those who learn the true meaning of the word NO. It may surprise you to learn that NO seldom means *no*. Let me share with you, based on my experience, a few of the things NO means.

First, NO means you haven’t tried enough times. I know one executive, named Paul, who intentionally *tests* the salespeople who cold call him, by saying *no* the first time, *no* the second time, then *yes I’ll listen to you* the third time. Paul told me that if a salesperson has enough professional persistence to call 3 times, he or she must *really believe* in the product and believe in the great benefit it will bring him, the end user. Those salespeople who don’t have this deep-seated belief will never get Paul’s business. They will just pick the low-hanging fruit – the easy yeses – then move on to their next sales job to sell a different product or service they don’t really believe in, either.

And NO can mean different things at different times from the same person:

- If I’m having a bad day, NO means I don’t want to talk to anybody and just want to be left alone.
- NO means I’ve never heard of you or your company.
- NO means you haven’t convinced me of enough *value* in exchange for the price you’re asking me to pay.
- NO means I prefer the devil I know to the devil I don’t know – meaning that even though my current supplier is an excuse-giving, lying, misdelivering so-and-so, at least I’ve learned how to deal with him and keep him in line ... and I don’t want to take a risk on somebody I don’t know. *You might be even worse.*
- NO means I liked your company’s old sales rep, but she told me you guys fired her unfairly – so I don’t want to do business with your company anymore.
- NO means I just got my vacation request denied and I’m not in the mood.
- NO means I heard a bad rumor about your company’s products through the grapevine – and I just don’t have time to research whether or not it’s true.
- NO means another salesperson just called and was a real piece of work – and “you salespeople” are all alike!
- NO means I don’t have any purchasing power, and it seems like whenever I make a recommendation to my boss it falls on deaf ears, so what’s the use in even talking to you?
- NO means my boss has me so stressed out I’m ready to scream – and I don’t want to scream at you so I’m saying NO to protect you.
- NO means I’m an important executive, very full of myself, and saying NO to a cold caller is one more way I can wield power – and I *love* it!
- NO means I’m really busy right now and just don’t have time.
- NO means I was just hired by my company and I don’t want them to think I’m immediately going on a spending spree.

- NO means I don't trust you yet – you'll have to give me more reasons.
- NO means just as you called, the boss motioned to me to come out of my office to meet our biggest client.
- NO means I just said Yes to somebody else, and I don't care if your product *is* better; I just don't have time to compare every single brand.
- NO means the last time I switched vendors I *almost* got fired because that new vendor screwed up an order – and I'm not going to *lose* my job for you.
- NO means I'm stepping into a meeting.
- NO means your offer sounds too good to be true, so I don't believe any of it.
- NO means I don't know of anybody else who does business with you.
- NO means the other guy's price is a lot lower, and your products seem just about the same to me.
- NO means I only do what I'm told – it's not my job to be proactive and think outside the box for better solutions.
- NO means the last time I gave my information to a cold caller, it was sold off and I got completely inundated with telemarketers and emails.
- NO means I'm behind on a critical deadline and my boss is watching me like a hawk right now.
- NO means I'm not a risk-taker and I feel safe with my current supplier.
- NO means the scandal last year involving "that other company" made your whole industry look bad – and you're guilty by association.
- NO means you seem pretty wet behind the ears – I want a veteran on this job.
- NO means I'm a low-paid, disgruntled underachiever and you're the only one I have any power over ... so I'm taking out my frustration on you.
- NO means I don't like the way you're dressed.
- NO means this is the busy season for our industry – didn't you do your research?
- NO means I'm not familiar with the new kind of service you're selling, but from the limited amount I've heard I'm sure I probably couldn't afford it.
- NO means you haven't given me enough information to make an educated decision.
- NO means I'm preparing for a big presentation and you just don't fit into my afternoon plans.
- No means my predecessor hired our current vendor who seems to be doing fine, and I'm not going to risk my new promotion by fixing what ain't broke.
- NO means I've seen your prices – and frankly they're so low you *must* be cutting corners on quality or service somewhere.
- NO means your product is too new and I want to see it proven in the marketplace before I commit.
- NO means I used your company several years ago and wasn't happy with the results.
- NO means I feel obligated to buy from my brother-in-law right now because of pressure from my sister.
- NO means you're not a major player in our industry, and I only do business with major players.

- NO means I bought one of the products you carry from a different company and hated it, so probably everything else in your catalog is just as bad.
- NO means the last time you came to call on me and I wasn't here, a well-intentioned staff member welcomed you in through the back door and walked you through our R&D department to let you leave a note on my desk, which was an enormous security breach because of the classified government contracts we work on. After you left, the next day everything hit the fan – our company got fined, some people almost lost their jobs, and it was an unbelievable mess. So even though it wasn't your fault, because you were associated with this fiasco your company name is on our blacklist right now. Maybe I can do business with you after all this dies down, but I couldn't buy from you right now no matter how much I wanted to. *(And lest you think that story's a stretch ... this actually happened to me. An almost unbelievable reason for saying no! One in a million.)*
- NO means my phone hasn't stopped ringing all morning and I've gotten nothing done.
- NO means I'm new in this position and I'm not going to start making any budget-busting decisions or recommendations until I'm firmly established, believe me.
- NO means you have the same name as my boyfriend who dumped me in college.
- NO means you had my company's facts wrong in our initial meeting, and if you think you can "wing it" without knowing your stuff in *this* business relationship, you're oh-so-wrong, buddy boy.
- NO means the Hollywood actor you've hired as your media spokesperson is a big schmuck, so if that's your idea of integrity I want nothing to do with you.
- NO means I'm eating a sandwich at my desk and you're interrupting the only break I'll get all day.
- NO means I'm not an early adopter – I always wait until a new product mainstreams and the price drops for the masses.
- NO means if you can somehow get through to my boss, and he gives the go-ahead, I'll make time for you.
- NO means you *tried* to go around me and get through to my boss, and nobody does that to me and gets away with it!
- NO means it's too much work to try to understand your broken English – or maybe I simply don't like your heavy foreign accent.
- NO means your company has a reputation for being high-priced, so I don't even want to waste my time listening to a pitch for something I'll probably end up buying from someone else.
- NO means I've seen your ads, and frankly their style just doesn't connect with me. I was even offended by one of them.
- NO means I can't talk now – I need to leave early and buy a gift for my wife.
- NO means the last time I bought something from somebody in your industry, I was seriously disappointed with the service.
- NO means our favorite supplier just walked in, carrying her annual holiday delivery of fresh-baked cookies ... and if I don't move fast, there'll be nothing left after the vultures get to them!
- NO means if you call me first thing in the morning, I'll probably be able to listen, but interrupt me again during my busy afternoons and I'll just shut you down.
- NO means I was expecting another call ... but it was only you.

- NO means as I picked up your call, Mr. Big walked into my office waving an urgent file.
- NO means you drove up in a foreign car and we're a Made-In-USA union shop ... Hello?
- NO means you'll have to be persistent because I'll eventually wear down if you approach me – tactfully – enough times.
- NO means I'm totally preoccupied with something else.
- NO means I'm not aware of that problem in my department, but if you can actually find somebody who's having it and wants to use your solution, consider me sold.
- NO means there are typos in your brochure, and if you're that careless in how you represent your own interests, how am I going to expect you to represent mine professionally?
- NO means you called me Kathleen when my name is Katherine – and I *hate* that.
- NO means we're a big company and you're a small company, which means you couldn't possibly meet our needs.
- NO means I just broke up with my fiancée and I'm so mad I can't see straight.
- NO means my budget just got cut – and I *assume* what you want to sell me is going to cost money.
- NO means I'm late for an appointment and don't have time.
- NO means you're the *tenth* cold caller today – why can't you people just leave me alone?
- NO means I'm broke and can't afford what you're selling, but I'm just too embarrassed to admit it to you.
- NO means I'm "on hold" on another more important call right now.
- NO means you have bad breath and I can't stand another moment in the same room with you.
- NO means I don't see my own need for what you're selling.
- NO means I refuse to *admit* I have the problem you're offering the solution for.

The bottom line is this: Don't give up. If you truly believe that what you're offering will benefit the person you're selling to, keep asking for their business. I read a lot of statistics, and do a lot of sales myself, and one statistic that's pretty consistent is that it often takes hearing NO from your prospect five to seven times before you'll finally hear YES. It goes like this: NO NO NO NO NO YES.

So does NO mean *no*? **NO!!**

©2005 Scott Sorrell. All rights reserved.

Scott Sorrell is a master sales trainer and success coach. He is known as "**Mr. Charge Higher Prices**,"™ because he teaches how to boost the bottom line of every transaction and relationship, as he works nationwide with sales teams and corporate executives of everyone from Fortune 500s to start-ups. Scott's seminar series, ***How to Charge Higher Prices & Get Your Customers to Thank You For It***,™ is acclaimed by sales professionals in dozens of industries. He is also the creator of the audio program ***The Power of Persuasion: How to Master the Art of Influence***.™ Scott can be contacted at 949 650-0006, or by email: ceo@SalesAdrenaline.com.