

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE FOR MASTERING

OBJECTIONS

THE ART AND SCIENCE OF GETTING PAST **NO**



JEB BLOUNT

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*For the Titans:
Mark Hunter, Anthony Iannarino,
and Mike Weinberg*

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Foreword: The Democracy of Objections

There are few one-size-fits-all solutions in sales. Complex sales are different from one-call closes. Calling on a business is different from selling directly to individual consumers. Selling software requires a different skill set than selling office automation equipment. Real estate sales has a different sales process than insurance or financial services.

In sales, context matters. There is little black and white. Every prospect, sales conversation, territory, company, and product are different. There is one exception, though—objections. As a sales professional, you face objections and the potential for objections, no matter your unique situation.

Objections don't care about or consider:

- who you are
- what you sell
- where you work
- where you live
- if your sales cycle is long or short, complex or transactional
- how your day is going
- if you are new to sales or a veteran

There is democracy in objections—a shared reality for all salespeople. You are going to get objections, and you need to learn how

to get past them. This is why Jeb Blount's *Objections* is one of the most important books to hit the sales profession in a generation. In this book, Jeb takes on both the *art* and *science* of getting past *no*.

It's his focus on the science of *no* that makes this the most powerful book ever penned on sales objections. When you leverage Jeb's frameworks for getting past *no*, you'll find yourself shortening the sales cycle, closing more deals, and getting higher prices.

Following in the footsteps of his blockbuster bestsellers *Fanatical Prospecting* and *Sales EQ*, this book will change the way you view sales objections forever. *Objections* is a comprehensive and contemporary guide that engages your mind and your heart. Jeb draws you in with examples and stories, all while teaching specific human-influence frameworks for turning around the four types of objections you face in the sales process.

At the same time, he pulls no punches, and in his signature right-to-the-point style, he slaps you in the face with the cold hard truth about what's really holding you back from the success and income you deserve.

Sales has changed so much over the past 20 years, yet sales trainers and experts continue to teach strategies that fall flat with modern buyers who are smart enough to know they are being manipulated. I've watched hundreds of salespeople crash and burn using these sleazy tactics as they attempt to bully and trick buyers rather than address their concerns.

Today's buyer is more sophisticated and informed. In *Objections* you'll learn a new psychology for getting past *no*. Rather than the same tired, cheesy, old-school scripts, you'll learn contextual frameworks and strategies for responding to objections in the real world.

From the first chapter all the way to the last chapter, you'll gain new insights that will help you get past objections. You'll find that you can easily relate to what Jeb has written. At times you will feel he's writing about you!

That's the power of Jeb's books. He is a sales expert who lives in the real world. A practitioner who gets up every day and sells just like you. When he's not training, you'll find him at his company Sales Gravy, in the trenches with his sales team prospecting, on sales calls, and like you, facing and getting past objections.

—**Mark Hunter**, author of *High-Profit Prospecting*

Introduction: It Wasn't Supposed To Be This Book

Writing books is the closest men ever come to childbearing.

—Norman Mailer

I wasn't planning on writing this book. It wasn't on my radar. Frankly, I never even considered writing a book on objections because it seemed like such limited subject matter.

The objection is most often a bit player; never the star of the show. There's usually a chapter on objections tucked away in the back of most sales books. And, sales training programs offer up a module or two on objections almost as an afterthought.

I was in the middle of writing a book on a much more important subject—sales-specific negotiation tactics. That was until I met Adam Vogel, the director of inside sales for the New York Mets. Adam and the Mets sales organization had fallen in love with my book *Fanatical Prospecting* and invited me to New York to inspire their stable of young sales guns to *make one more call*.

Bright, young, well-dressed sales professionals gathered in the auditorium at Citi Field for what my Sales Gravy team calls “Jeb Un-Plugged.” It's a session in which sales professionals and sales leaders hurl questions and challenges at me and I answer whatever comes my way. No script, no slides, and no preparation.

I enjoy unplugged sessions. It's my favorite way to teach. For three hours, they hit me with hard questions. When it was all over, they let me go to a game (I'm an unapologetic fan of baseball).

During the game, something kept tugging at me about the questions they'd asked. There was a pattern there that I just couldn't put my finger on. But, as I was walking out of the stadium that evening, it hit me. Almost all the questions thrown at me that afternoon were about how to deal with objections—what to say, what to do, and how to respond. When I thought about it, most of the questions brought to me by salespeople, from all walks of life, were in one form or another about objections. I just hadn't been paying attention.

The sudden revelation struck me like a lightning bolt—one of those *aha!* moments that sets you on fire. The next morning, I was up at five, staring at the clock and waiting for eight so I could call Shannon Vargo at my publisher, John Wiley and Sons. I was so fired up for this book that I hadn't slept all night.

It occurs to me as I write this, that I don't actually know Shannon's job title; suffice to say that she's a big cheese at Wiley who makes decisions about what gets published and what does not. And she's cool because she takes my calls.

When Shannon answered the phone, I breathlessly pitched my idea for this book and why we should push the other book back, even though it was already on the publishing schedule. I was talking so fast, I'm sure I sounded like a squirrel on meth.

When I finished, there was silence on the other end of the line. I braced for the objection. Then she said *yes*. She loved the idea!

After a brief second of elation and a fist pump, I panicked. I've got impulse-control issues. In my exuberance for the idea, I hadn't considered that to replace the book I was already working on, I'd have only four months to write *Objections*.

The pain was worth it. My exuberance for *Objections* did not and has not waned. I fell in love with this book because it finally tells

the real truth about objections, where objections come from, and about how and why you respond to objections the way you do.

This is the most comprehensive look at sales objections ever written. It's different from every book that has ever been published on sales objections. Rather than treating objections like a small piece of a much greater puzzle, the objection is finally the star of the show. I hope that you'll love this book as much as I do.

1

Asking—The Most Important Discipline in Sales

Go for no.

—Andrea Waltz

Richard left 71 voice mail messages asking for an appointment. He sent 18 emails. He stalked me on LinkedIn.

He managed to get me to answer the phone on at least three occasions, but I brushed him off each time. He also called, and wrote, and connected on social media with each of the key stakeholders in my organization.

For five months Richard asked and asked and asked for an opportunity to demonstrate his software solution. And for five months, he got nowhere—until he finally caught me at the right time. It was in May, five months after his first attempt to set an appointment.

When I answered the phone, I recognized his voice. I almost brushed him off again, but since I didn't have anything else scheduled and he'd been so persistent, I felt a subconscious obligation to give him a chance.

Richard wasted no time getting me to agree to a demo. His software as a service (SaaS) solution was impressive, and it did solve one of our training delivery problems. I was transparent about how much I liked what he'd shown me. Less than an hour later, he asked for my commitment to buy.

Without thinking, I threw out an objection:

"Richard, it looks like a great program and I like it. But I'm going to need to discuss it with my team before we commit to anything. I know some of them have advocated for your platform, but my schedule is packed, and getting everyone up to speed and using it is going to be a distraction in the short term. I want to be sure we are all aligned before making this investment, because I don't want to buy yet another software program that everyone is excited about but never uses."

Richard responded by relating to my situation and clarifying my concern:

"Jeb, it sounds like you've been burned in the past with SaaS subscriptions that go unused. I get it! It feels like you're just pouring money down the drain."

"If I understand you correctly, it seems like your top concerns are: a) it's going to be a distraction training everyone, and b) if we don't get your team up to speed fast, they won't use it and it will be a wasted investment."

"Did I get that right?"

I agreed that those were my biggest concerns. It felt good that he really seemed to understand where I was coming from.

"Other than these two concerns, what else do we need to address?"

I responded that there was nothing else holding me back. Then he *minimized* my concern:

"The best way for your team to experience the power of our platform is to get their hands on it. What if I take the burden off you and take full responsibility for getting your team trained and making sure they are using it?"

“With your blessing, I’ll schedule a training call with your trainers and coaches to show them how to use the platform. I’ll then monitor their usage and report back to you each week until we’ve integrated usage into their daily routine. That way it doesn’t take any time out of your busy schedule, and you have the peace of mind that your money is well spent.

“Since this isn’t a long-term commitment and you can quit anytime, if your team doesn’t use the program we can shake hands and part ways. There isn’t much to lose here and there’s a lot to gain, so why don’t we get your account set up, and let me make this easy for you?”

Before I knew it, he had my corporate AMEX card number and Sales Gravy was his newest customer.

The Discipline to Ask

Asking is the most important discipline in sales. You must ask for what you want, directly, assumptively, assertively, and repeatedly. Asking is the key that unlocks:

- Qualifying information
- Appointments
- Demos
- Leveling up to decision makers or down to influencers
- Information and data for building your business case
- Next steps
- Micro-commitments
- Buying commitments

In sales, asking is everything. If you fail to ask, you’ll end up carrying a box full of the stuff from your desk to your car on the way to the unemployment line. Your income will suffer. Your career will suffer. Your family will suffer. You will suffer.

When you fail to ask, you fail.

It’s the truth and this truth will not change. But as my favorite line from the movie *The Big Short* goes, “The truth is like poetry. And most people fucking hate poetry.”

You Are Not Getting What You Want Because You Are Not Asking for What You Want

If you are having a hard time getting the next appointment, getting to decision makers, getting information from stakeholders, leveling up higher in the organization, or closing the deal, it's not because you lack prospecting skills, closing skills, the right words to say, or tactics for getting past the inevitable objections.

Nope, you are not getting what you want because you are not asking for what you want. Why? Nine times out of ten you are insecurely and passively beating around the bush because you are afraid to hear the word *no*.

In this state, confident and assumptive asking gets replaced with wishing, hoping, and wanting. You hesitate and use weak, passive words. Your tone of voice and body language exude insecurity and desperation. You wait for your prospect to do your job for you and set the appointment, set the next step, or close the deal themselves.

But they don't.

Instead, they resist and push back with objections. They put you off, brush you off, turn you off, and sometimes steamroll right over you. Your passive, insecure, fearful behavior only serves to encourage more resistance and rejection.

In sales, passive doesn't work. Insecurity won't play. Wishing and hoping is not a viable strategy.

Only direct, confident, assumptive asking gets you what you want.

Conjuring the Deepest, Darkest Human Fear

Asking with confidence is one of the most difficult things for humans to do. The assumptive ask requires you to put it all out there and take an emotional risk, with no guarantees. When you ask with

confidence, you make yourself instantly vulnerable, with no place to take cover. Vulnerability, according to Dr. Brene Brown, author of the *Power of Vulnerability*, is created in the presence of uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure. This vulnerability conjures up the deepest and darkest of human fears: *Rejection*.

Leading up to your *ask*, everything in your body and mind are screaming at you to *stop* as the anticipation of being rejected generates this deep sense of vulnerability. Rejection is a painful demotivator and the genesis of deep-rooted fear.

The fear and avoidance of the emotional pain caused by rejection is why most people seek the easy way out. It's the top reason why sales professionals fail to reach their true potential and income. The fear of rejection is the most treacherous disruptive emotion for salespeople.

There Is No Silver-Bullet Objection Slayer

For as long as salespeople have been asking buyers to make commitments, buyers have been throwing out objections; and, as long as buyers have been saying no, salespeople have yearned for the secrets to getting past *no*.

Salespeople are obsessed with shortcuts and silver bullets that will miraculously deliver *yeses* without the risk of rejection. This is exactly why so many of the questions I get about dealing with objections begin with: “What’s the trick for . . . ,” or “Can you tell me the secret to . . . ,” or “What words can I say that will get them to say *yes*?”

Salespeople seek techniques for avoiding *no* in the same vein that golfers pursue the perfect putter. And there is an endless line of pseudo-experts, gurus, and artificial-intelligence witch doctors who pander to the deep insecurities of vulnerable salespeople with false and dangerous claims that they have the secret to the ever-present mystery of how to eliminate rejection.

Let's get this straight from the get-go: These charlatans, most of whom couldn't sell their way out of a paper bag, are just dead wrong.

- There is no perfect putter that will take 20 strokes off your game overnight.
- There is no easy button that will close the deal every time.
- There is no magic fairy dust that will take the sting out of rejection.
- There are no silver-bullet words that will slay objections and stun prospects into submission.
- There are no perfect scripts that will turn *no* into *yes*, every time.
- Artificial intelligence and software programs will not close the deal for you.
- There are no unicorns.

Here are two brutal, and undeniable, truths (and we already know how people feel about the truth):

1. The *only* way to eliminate rejection is to *never ask for anything again. Ever!*
2. To be *successful* in sales, you must ditch your wishbone and grow a backbone.

Everything in sales begins with and depends on the discipline to *ask*.

Author's Note

Throughout the book I use the terms “stakeholder,” “prospect,” “decision maker,” and “buyer” interchangeably to describe the various people you meet during the sales process. These are the people who give you sales objections. I did this for several reasons. First, it makes the writing easier to consume—it becomes boring and repetitive to use the same descriptors time and again. Second, salespeople and sales organizations don't all use the same terms. Finally, I want to make the point that objections don't always come from the direct decision maker.

2

How to Ask

Asking is the beginning of receiving.

—Jim Rhon

Starting with prospecting, while advancing your deals through the sales process, and continuing all the way through the close, you must constantly be asking for what you want. To reduce resistance and get what you want, you must ask confidently, concisely, and assertively, with no hesitation.

There are three keys to asking (Figure 2.1):

1. Ask with confidence and assume you will get what you want.
2. Shut up!
3. Be prepared to deal with objections.