



## **Transforming (not Overcoming) Objections**

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Your first reaction to an unpleasant situation often makes things worse. By recognizing your emotions and learning to ask the right kind of questions, you can overcome even the most troubling objections from prospects and clients.

“I am not sure that the cost justifies your service. I’ve always managed my own money,” says the potential client sitting in front of you.

With a single statement like this, your congeniality can become defensiveness. Your ego and instincts push you to defend your fee and justify your worth by questioning the viability of your prospective client’s current investments and pouring out instance after instance when you’ve helped other clients save and make money. With each successive story, the client becomes less interested. You push on, hoping that your miraculous ability will finally make this doubter understand your worth.

Left with nothing more to say, you stop and the client says, “It all sounds interesting, but I am not sure it’s for me. I’ve always managed my own money I am happy to keep doing it.”

The two of you shake hands and the potential client becomes a lost opportunity before you have the chance to explain that you do more than just “manage money.” You are left to wonder about what just happened.

The potential client, you may decide, presented you with an objection that you could not overcome.

Yet, looking at the surface of this interaction won’t give you the full story. A set of emotions within you – defensiveness, anger, maybe others – produced your outward reaction. Becoming aware of these emotions and working with them is the key to changing how you deal with future objections.

You must first realize that the emotional flood we experience in response to opposition is natural and unpreventable. Because we can’t prevent those emotions, learning to channel them into clarity of intentions and calm authenticity is the best option. With clarity and a genuine approach you naturally cultivate trust and long term relationships while still accomplishing the ultimate goal – closing the deal.



## **Accepting objections as opportunities**

When a client presents you with an objection, they are taking the first step in building more understanding and trust. This may be hard to see, since by objecting the prospect is setting themselves in opposition, perhaps even questioning the worth of what you offer. Resist the temptation to take this personally and look more precisely into what oppositions can be.

Opposing energies confronting one another, after all, is a formula for creation. For example, good leaders hold onto two opposing viewpoints at the same time, and they weigh opposing sides in tension until a course of action emerges. Likewise, the miracle of flight requires the turbulent interaction of two opposing energies – drag and thrust occurring at the same time.

Opposing energies confronting each other respectfully shine light on unexposed ideas and commonalities ripe for collaboration. When meeting with clients, learn to recognize any opposing energy or objections and use them to advance your goal. When your client expresses an objection, it is a gift; they are giving you an opposing energy to with which to fashion a solution. React with acceptance, endure the turbulence of opposition and a mutually agreeable way forward will emerge – maybe one you never would have come to on your own.

## **Inner awareness**

Even if you appreciate the creative value of opposing energies, accepting an objection as an opportunity requires some internal work. Acceptance happens only when you become aware of your own, inner dialogue and emotions. Without awareness, your emotions can hijack you, forcing a reaction that lacks clarity or care for the client.

Those hijackings manifest themselves in several different forms. Defensiveness might drive us to spout irrelevant facts and statements aiming to justify ourselves, or consternation may force us to freeze and stumble.

Ask yourself what you are feeling in the moment and be honest with yourself. Are you experiencing fear of losing the client, defensiveness and anger, or frustration with expectations that are not being met? Even just recognizing and acknowledging such emotions can cool them. Your need to react rashly lessens and their power over you will loosen.

As the emotional heat subsides, the energy of the reaction still exists and can be channeled into clear intentions. Ask yourself what outcomes you seek given the circumstances. For instance, if you noticed defensiveness and anger around an objection that questions your worth, try to understand what experience has caused your client to think this way. If you experienced frustration when your client mentioned they needed more time to think about a proposal, ask to hear more about what your client needs to understand be-



fore moving forward. Calmly probing these objections allows you to move the conversation towards clarity on both sides of the table.

### **Active listening and asking genuine questions**

To know more about why your prospect does not find value in your service, you must actively listen and ask genuine questions.

Active listening requires you to reflect back to the client what they have told you. For example, you might reflect back by saying, "Mrs. Client what I heard you say is that you don't understand the value of what I offer. Is that correct?"

Wait for the client to respond. Sometimes they might hear the reflection and realize they've misrepresented themselves, or you might have misheard the client. Any response will require more acceptance, awareness, active listening and reflecting back. For the purpose of this example, assume the client answers with a simple "yes."

Ask a question to gain the understanding you seek. The question might be: "Can you tell me, Mrs. Client, what in your experience makes you question the value of using a financial advisor?"

Wait for the client to clearly state what they have reservations about. They might say, "I have someone who helps me invest and he charges nothing," or, "I've always managed my money and have done really well."

Often responses to such questions will lead to several more questions you can ask, and eventually you'll have a more nuanced understanding of a prospect's financial background. You can then uncover points of interest – things for which your client needs help, but in which he or she may not realize your expertise, such as in tax issues, managing debt, life-style questions, or the implications of a sale of business or other asset.

Continue to practice active listening by reflecting back and asking questions to make more explicit your prospect's needs. Once their needs are clear, suggest how you can help meet them. Don't overreach; be honest about your capabilities and refer out to other partners when necessary.

### **Practice and approach**

The key to approaching your clients with more authenticity is awareness of your emotions, particularly when your emotions kick in. In sports, solid performance results from regular practice and specific preparation for each game. Honing awareness takes a similar dedication.



First, commit time each day to practicing awareness, while also building five minutes into your meeting preparation time for warming up this skill. We all have mechanisms for getting focused and staying clear and aware; if you know what your method is, keep up with it. If you don't know what method suits you, try different techniques until you find one that works for you.

Some people close their eyes and follow their breath to get present and focused. Others take a quiet walk. Putting golf balls or doing some other kind of repetitive action can work too. Second, practice identifying your emotions by writing down what you are experiencing before and after each meeting you conduct. The more you practice acknowledging emotions, the better and faster you can identify and diffuse them while with a prospect or client.

Results will take time, and this is not a panacea for all tough situations. Some clients may not give you the time and space to clarify your intentions or ask questions. But if you commit to practice, and you are patient and realistic about results, eventually you will notice more trust and loyalty from your clients – and more clients among the prospects who walk through your door.

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