

Rejection: Getting Through the No's

Written by Julie Desmond
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Business owner Jim brought Sales 101 to his team this week. He singlehandedly played both parts to demonstrate a very familiar sales call:

Kid: Can I have a cookie?

Dad: No.

Kid: Please, can I have a cookie?

Dad: No.

Kid: Daddy, please may I have a cookie?

Dad: No.

Kid: Just one? Please?

Dad: No.

Kid: C'mon, please, Dad, just one cookie?

Dad (ripping open the package): Oh, all right, here, take the whole package!

Familiar scene? Who has not had the experience of, in exasperation, rewarding someone simply for persistence? Why do you think the same commercials run repeatedly, and the same jingles are played so frequently that we can't get them out of our brains?

Jim's team is learning that the best way to get a yes is to start collecting no's. In fact, studies show it takes five rejections to get to an acceptance, on average. This means that if you call on someone one time, it is reasonable to expect him to reject whatever you have to sell. Successful salespeople know that the best response to that first rejection is, "Thank you." Thank you, customer, for getting us through that first no. Remember, customer, we need about five of those if I am going to make a sale.

So the next day or week or month, you return to the same door, knock, and this time the prospect might recognize your company name or product. But he or she will still, most likely, refuse to buy. So you say, "Thank you," again, and go on your way, because you are now one no closer to yes.

Continue this process in a friendly, upbeat, positive way and by the fifth call, you just might have a prospect willing to hear your pitch. And he or she will still, in all likelihood, turn you down. This means you have a whole pocketful of rejections, but you know that it takes about five no's to get to yes. So you go back one more time and, at long last, you get the sale.

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Kids know this persuasion system intuitively. It starts when they holler for that first sip of milk. What do we do? We give them what they need. Eventually, most of us unlearn this behavior. We hear that begging is annoying, and no means no, and eventually professional rejection starts to feel personal.

If you are responsible for business development, or just want to reach a goal, try to step back into that little kid inside you, the one who never gives up. Reach further, move away from your comfort zone, and ask for the sale. If you have competition, they'll likely drop out of the race long before you do. And soon enough, you will see someone tearing open a metaphorical box of cookies and saying, "Here, take the whole thing."

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