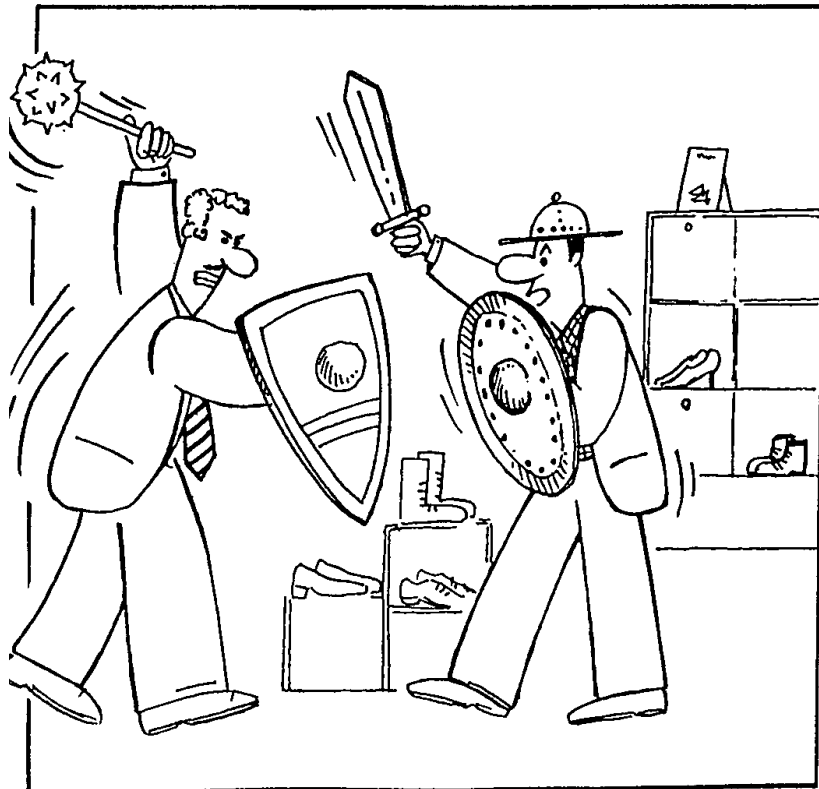


## 7. How to handle objections

Objections represent frequent and delicate situations that a seller must be prepared to handle in order to manage a negotiation successfully.

Frequent because objections have always been part of the rules of the commercial game: people who buy must raise objections and people who sell must try to overcome them.

Delicate because it's easy to fall into a dispute especially when the objection is hard to handle, falling into a dangerous conflict situation means that we risk not only the loss of the sale but also of the customer.



*"Nobody ever won an argument with a customer, at best ... they lost the customer".*

**OTTANTAVENTI S.r.l.**  
**Milan:**  
Via Vincenzo Monti 8  
Phone +39 02/46712222  
Fax +39 02/48013233  
**Perugia:**  
Via Mario Angeloni 43/a  
Phone +39 075/500.44.35  
Fax +39 075/500.44.95  
[www.ottantaventi.it](http://www.ottantaventi.it)

### How to handle objections

How to sell clothing in a store – Manual for clothing and footwear / Vittorio Galgano

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## 1. Reasons for objections

- Customers are by nature argumentative and while purchasing something find themselves in a good position to express this personality trait:



In this situation it would be a mistake to deal with all her objections.

It is wise to choose and handle the two most significant objections and ignore the others, unless the customer repeats them, but this rarely happens.

- Sometimes the customer may be nitpicking, they find fault with insignificant details so as to ask for a price reduction.



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**Milan:**  
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Fax +39 02/48013233  
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If you propose an alternative item, they will probably find the same fault or perhaps even another one. So, if you believe that the customer is really interested in that product, don't rise to the bait. With the utmost politeness ask if they would prefer to see something else. It is probable that the customer will be discouraged and will not insist on the request for a discount or may not even have the courage to make one.

- The proposed item doesn't meet their requirements. This happens because the customer's requirements haven't been clearly identified and the salesperson makes a mistake in their choice of to present.



These kinds of objections can be recognized by the following sentences:

*"They aren't very elegant."*



*'I often find those uncomfortable to wear.'*

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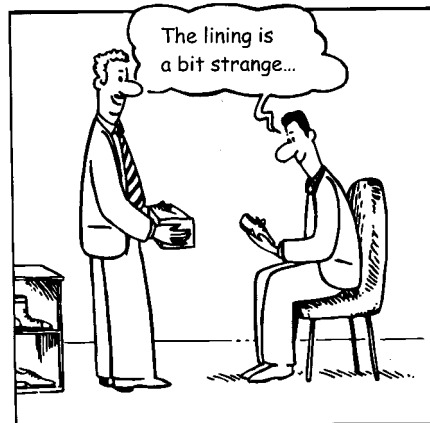
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- The item is the right one but the salesperson focuses on the wrong arguments and ignores the ones which are most interesting from the customer's point of view customer.
- The customer hides their need to be reassured and obtain additional information about the product behind an objection.

For example, while looking at a suit they might say: 'I've never seen fabric like this before'.

Or, while looking at a pair of shoes:



He is actually asking for more information about the fabric or the lining.

If he says: 'It isn't real chamois, is it?' He is just asking for more information in order to be sure that it is in fact real chamois.

- He doesn't want to let the salesperson know that the product is beyond his means.
- The salesperson behaves in a way which elicits objections making the customer argumentative.
- The salesperson comes across as being uncertain of the product and not very credible.
- The customer wants to be flattered.

This can be seen through questions like:

"Don't you think I look a bit short in these shoes?"

"I don't think these shoes show off my legs"

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**Milan:**  
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 Phone +39 02/46712222  
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**Perugia:**  
 Via Mario Angeloni 43/a  
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These are not real objections and betray a desire for flattery. In this situation a compliment should be made.

## 2. Mistakes to avoid in responding to objections

- **Interrupting** - Interrupting, as we have already seen, displays impatience, impoliteness, rudeness and poor listening skills. Besides annoying the customer, it will turn the negotiation towards a negative result.

Customer: "Do you think the color of this skirt ..."

The salesperson interrupts and says: "Maybe you don't like the color but this year it's very fashionable"

If the customer hadn't been interrupted, they could have said: "... matches the color of my sweater?"

Needless to say that the negotiation is becoming dangerous because of interruption. In fact, the salesperson mistook the customer doubt which could have been overcome easily. Reacting in this way he risks calling into doubt the beauty of the color (the customer may or may not like the color). Besides this, the customer is prevented from expressing one of their motivations: a color which matches with the one they are wearing.

- **Answering too readily.** A quick, victorious answer leads the customer to think that they have lost (and nobody

OTTANTAVENTI S.r.l.

Milan:

Via Vincenzo Monti 8

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Fax +39 02/48013233

Perugia:

Via Mario Angeloni 43/a

Phone +39 075/500.44.35

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likes to feel like a loser) and to be more convinced than ever of the validity of their opinions. They will think: "The salesperson is so ready to answer because this objection is valid and everybody raises it".

- **Arguing.** To avoid pointless and very dangerous conflicts, we return to something we have already said. While the customer is talking it is important to nod and use the technique of apparent agreement: "Yes, you are right but..." "I agree with you but...". More than a technique it should be a mental attitude, a real and active desire to see and consider things from other people's points of view. Following this guideline, we gain the advantages of avoiding argumentations, of not annoying the customer and creating a positive attitude toward our response.

### 3. Techniques for answering objections

- **Weaken disadvantages and reply with advantages.** Weaken an objection by rephrasing it using different words and compensate for the objection by replying with advantages.  
Customer: "This model has a very complicated fastening, is very uncomfortable and difficult to put on".  
"You are right the fastening takes a little time (weakening), but you will appreciate it when you are walking on mountain trails because it protects and supports your ankle (advantages).
- **Elicit.** We can see that the customer is hesitant but we don't understand his doubt. Psychology teaches us that in these situations we must elicit the objection to discover the real obstacle. It is often useful to present a strong point as if it were a sales obstacle.  
"Are you unsure about the fabric?".  
The fabric is a strong point of the item and it has not escaped the attention of the expert salesperson that the customer likes the fabric very much.  
Confronted with the stimulus that the question represents how does human nature react? To use an inelegant expression, the customer will probably spit out their real objection responding like this:  
"Oh, no, the fabric is very beautiful but I wonder if this

OTTANTAVENTI S.r.l.  
Milan:  
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dress is suitable for an elegant dinner” (Here it is: the dress should be suitable for an elegant dinner.)

Now the retailer knows the objection which he needs to overcome and gains information on another specific requirement of the customer.

- **Throw back.** Throwing back the objection of a customer is another very useful technique. By using this technique the salesperson discovers the customer’s point of view and can then modify it.  
“Why do you think it is not suitable?”
- **Exploit.** Customer objections can be exploited to support the sales argument.  
Customer "I asked for a well ventilated, comfortable pair of shoes, but I do not like the lining".  
The salesperson: "You are right, the leather lining is more beautiful, but a canvas lining is better for ventilation".
- **Sincerity is always the best “art”.** There are situations where sincerity, rather than simply being the best moral behavior to be used as a reference point, is also the most profitable.

This suit fits me but if it were a little larger, don’t you think it would look better on me?

If it’s not true and the customer is merely seeking reassurance, you can answer: “Madame, it fits you perfectly, you are size M”.

They will be grateful for your reassurance.

However, if it is true, you will lose their respect and trust by giving this answer. You would be better to say: “You are right, but our tailoring service can easily make it perfect for you”.

Never propose the wrong size because even if you make the sale, you will lose the customer, or, even worse, you may lose the sale and the customer.

Other situations which require the utmost propriety:

Customer: I like this colored underwear but it’s so inconvenient having to wash it separately!”

If you are not completely sure that the item will not fade in water, the best answer is: “You are right, the best thing to do is to wash it separately”.

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Phone +39 02/46712222

Fax +39 02/48013233

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Via Mario Angeloni 43/a

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- **Price objection.** Price is the most frequently raised objection because it is the easiest. It is often elicited by the uncertainty and the defensive attitude of the salesperson.



The best way to face this objection is to inform the customer of the price using the same tone of voice people use when they deliver good news. How can we induce people to buy an item if we propose it giving the impression that it is an expensive item? It is opportune to realize that high price is a specific feature of all luxury goods which are often linked to the need to display prestige. Could this need be satisfied by products whose price is accessible to everyone?

Besides informing the customer of the price in the same way as they would deliver a piece of good news, a salesperson must know the product features well in order to demonstrate through the method "Features and Benefits" that the item proposed is indeed worth the expenditure.

### *Examples*

Customer: "I like this coat more but I don't want to spend so much!"

Salesperson: "The good thing about this coat is not only the perfect cut but also the brushed cashmere fabric, made of the best fibers, which means a very light, soft, warm fabric. Besides this, the length of the fibers and the spinning method

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**Milan:**  
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 Fax +39 02/48013233  
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 Via Mario Angeloni 43/a  
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used make the fabric much more durable and resistant to pilling, so you won't get those baubles of tangled fibers which appear on fabrics after prolonged use."

If you are not sure that the customer knows what pilling is, it is worth explaining the meaning, without creating the impression of giving lessons or talking down to the customer.

Customer: "These shoes are comfortable but the price you quoted seems a bit too high".

Salesperson: "Don't they fit like a glove though? The comfort is achieved by a very particular manufacturing process: the upper part has been sewn to the lower part so as to create a kind of sachet, this is then sewn to the sole. The resulting shoe is very resistant but as soft and flexible as a glove".

When the customer asks for the price before evaluating or even trying the item on, it is good practice to explain in advance the most important features and their advantages.

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Via Mario Angeloni 43/a

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