

Research Note: Most Common Mistakes Professionals Make When Selling

By Mike Schultz

Most professional services providers pride themselves on their deep understanding of their clients' needs, their ability to provide solutions to their needs, and how their clients truly value their counsel and partnership.

According to the nearly 200 buyers of professional services that we surveyed in our research study *How Clients Buy*, service providers are not faring particularly well in these areas with their potential clients. We asked the buyers of professional services how often, in the last few times they purchased services, they encountered a variety of problems. Here are the top ten problems:

Problem	How Often Encountered
Did not listen to me	41%
Did not understand my needs	40%
Did not respond to my requests and correspondences in timely manner	38%
Did not convince me of value I would receive from using his/her services	32%
Did not craft compelling solution to my needs	31%
Talked too much	30%
Had no personal chemistry with me	26%
Was overzealous in trying to win my business	25%
Seemed to lack enthusiasm for winning my business	24%
Was late to either in-person or telephone meetings	24%

** Partial listing of results*

If all of these mistakes are happening, then service providers should work on improving ALL of them, right? Well, not so fast. According to the buyers, when it comes to their decision to buy services, some of these "areas of improvement" are more powerful than others.

We asked the buyers how much *more likely* they would be to consider purchasing the services of a professional service provider, if that person showed improvement in each of the problem areas. In order of importance, these are the most important problems for service providers to fix.

Problem	How Often Encountered	"Much More Likely" To Consider Purchasing If Problem Didn't Exist
Did not understand my needs	40%	76%
Did not listen to me	41%	74%
Did not craft compelling solution to my needs	31%	68%
Did not convince me of value I would receive from using his/her services	32%	62%
Seemed to lack enthusiasm for winning my business	24%	60%
Was late to either in-person or telephone meetings	24%	50%
Did not respond to my requests and correspondences in a timely manner	38%	42%
Had no personal chemistry with me	26%	41%
Was overzealous in trying to win my business	25%	33%
Talked too much	30%	25%

Takeaways:

- The top problems buyers encounter are the most important to fix.
- If service providers would listen more, they'd probably do a better job of understanding needs and crafting compelling solutions to needs.
- While they encounter the problems equally as often, it's more of an issue for buyers if the service provider lacks enthusiasm than if the service provider is overly enthusiastic.

- 85% of buyers encountered at least one of these problems recently. There is a lot of room for improvement for service providers when it comes to selling.

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