

## Consent-based selling By: Rebecca Liston

Earlier this year I wrote an article that went out in our email newsletter entitled “Will You Partner With Me in the NO?” It was a think-piece about my experience in having had an amazing sales conversation with a potential client, one that I was so sure was going to result in an opportunity to work together – we were all so excited at the prospect of it when we were talking – and about how they (and we) navigated the follow up sales call: the call on which they said “no” to working with us.

It’s true that Sarah and I were astonished by the no. We had been so sure that we were about to launch into a partnership with this client that we’d been chatting about ideas for them already, eager to begin our work.

It’s also true that Sarah and I were disappointed by the no. We really like this client and what they were up to in the world. We had looked forward to supporting them.

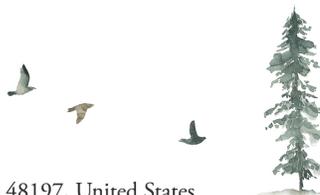
And it is also true that Sarah and I were grateful and appreciative of how this person told us that their answer was no.

This potential client emailed us to set up a time for the traditional follow up sales call knowing all along that the answer was no. This potential client did not ghost us, or shoot us an email. Instead, this person showed up on a follow up sales call and talked to us, said she’d thought about it, and had decided that it wasn’t the right decision to go ahead, so she “was a no.”

Sarah and I felt astonished. We felt disappointed.

We also felt grateful. Appreciated. Respected.

We thanked this person, who admitted that it hadn’t been easy to come to the call to tell us, eyeball to eyeball, that the answer was no. And we wished this potential client all the best as we ended the call.



“More of that, please,” I said to Sarah after, which is what we often say to one another after a particularly fabulous client call. More of being in partnership with prospective clients, even when they’re telling us no.

So I wrote about this to our newsletter list and it was only after it went out that I realized I had opened a can of worms.

“I am surprised you didn’t ask why the answer was no. What was the objection? Was it a money issue? Couldn’t you have reframed it for them to get them to a yes?”

“Your approach to this is not at all what I would have taken. I know for a fact that when prospects are all hot and heavy during the sales call, and then back out at the last minute, it’s just their fear talking. You should’ve coached them through it. Got them to see that it was a block and shown them how badly they actually wanted to work with you, but they were saying no out of fear.”

“It’s been my experience that getting a no on a follow up sales call, especially when things had gone so well on the initial call, is an indication that you’ve just not explained things well enough. You should have taken them back through the process of looking at their pain points and guided them to a yes.”

“You should have gotten their credit card on that first call. They were enthusiastic and excited. If you’d just gotten payment in that moment, it would have been a done deal.”

“That’s just weird. I can’t believe you didn’t close them. Don’t you teach sales?!?”

When I read these emails, I felt embarrassed. At one point, I even felt a bit ashamed.

I hadn’t asked any questions after they said no.

I hadn’t gone through their objections.

I hadn’t taken them back into their pain points.

I hadn’t coached them through any of it.

I hadn’t taken their credit card on that first call.

I hadn’t closed them.



In short...

I hadn't done one single thing that I had been taught to do by every coach I had ever had.

And you know why I hadn't?

Because it's gross.

Because everything I had been taught about sales is gross.

Every. Single. Thing.

I had been taught to question someone's answer of no.

To suggest to them that their decision was the wrong decision.

That I knew what was best for them. Not them.

That it was "just fear" that was standing in their way, and they were foolish to allow it to...that they should "just get over it" and do it anyways.

To convince them that working with me was the solution to all their problems.

To talk them into it.

To persuade them.

Sweeten the deal.

To make them pay right then and there so they wouldn't have the chance to change their minds.

Think about this for a moment.

Does any of it sound vaguely familiar? Anything pop to mind as to why this whole thing feels so freakin' gross?

It seems to me that I had been taught that "no" doesn't actually mean "no."

That "no" meant nothing.



It was just a word to be “worked around.”

And that, had I just taken payment right away...well...I would have had my needs met...and it would be too late for them to change their mind...

When I thought about it, I realized that, at its core, the kind of selling I had been taught to do was coercive, dominance-based, and downright manipulative. It smacked of all the things I was taught never to do in any personal or intimate relationship, so why would it be okay in a sales conversation?

And so, dear reader, I asked myself: When does no not actually mean no?

The answer is: Never.

No. Is. No. Period. Full-stop.

This old way of doing sales has just got to go.

It simply isn't right.

Stella has always said to our prospective clients that she wanted them to be a “full body YES” to working with us. Sure, it was normal to feel a bit of nervous anticipation (which is very different from fear). Sure, it was normal to have fleeting doubts (that's human nature). But when our prospective clients get quiet within themselves, we wish for them to find, in the still, quiet place within, that their answer is YES.

It's from *that* place that good things happen.

That marketing messages can be crafted.

That aligned actions can be taken.

That positive partnerships can be forged.

And that businesses – and people – can grow. Together.

More of that, please.

