

## No Sale Today: Dealing with “Be Backers” By Fred Jaeckle

If you have been reading my articles by now you know that there are three critical success factors in the sales equation. These three factors are store traffic, close ratio or percentage, and average sale size, all of which you should be measuring. An improvement in any or all three of these will have a positive influence on your sales and your bottom line.

Unfortunately, most sales people and even some store managers think that store traffic is the most important, and they believe that if traffic goes down, sales will also go down, that is just the way it is, and there is nothing they can do about it. The reality is that we don't have much control over store traffic, but we do have control over close percentages and average sale size. Both of these can be improved by education, practice, and the professionalism of the sales person. These are items I have addressed in previous articles, and most likely will be addressing again in future articles.

First of all I would like to point out that in a perfect world there would be no “be-backers”, that most, if not all customers would be closed on their first visit to the store. An all out effort must be expended to achieve that utopian goal. It is important, because studies have shown that only one in ten of the “be-backers” actually do return to the store.

The focus of this article will be on both getting “be-backers” to return to the store because closing them is so much easier when they do. That is why it is so important to get them back.

Unfortunately, I have not been able to find statistics and averages on both closing percentages for retail flooring stores, most likely because most stores do not measure these factors. For the purpose of this article I will be using statistics for furniture stores, since furniture stores are very similar to retail flooring in that both flooring and furniture stores are generally dealing with the same type of customer and both are largely dependent on consumer discretionary income for their sales. Also, both furniture and flooring stores generally get engaged with a customer when they are in the process of redecorating or remodeling their home, or building a new home.

Be-back customers, for my purpose in this article, are customers who have visited the store and return to the store and to the sales person on the same project. It doesn't matter whether they return within a week a month, or several months as long as it is the same project.

Research has shown that the average close ratio for furniture stores is 20%. I would hope that it is much higher than that for flooring stores, particularly your flooring store. The same research has shown that the close ratio is three times higher for customers that “come back” than for first time customers. That difference is huge. That means the close ratio goes from 20% to 60%. Now you can see why it is important to get these people back to your store.

Remember, the fact that you didn't close this customer the first time means that something must have gone wrong in the sales process. Perhaps you spent too much time on showing product vs. finding the right product and the right solution to create a beautiful room that would give your customer the look and feeling they desired. However, since they have come back, you or your salesperson must have done some thing right, since they chose to return. No one will go back to a bad dentist, and likewise no one will return to a flooring store where the shopping experience was not good.

Since only one in ten “be-backers” actually does come back, what can we do to improve that ratio? First of all, the salesperson merely handing the customer his or her card as they leave the store won't do it. The salesperson will have to be proactive, and it all starts with making sure that you or the salesperson get the customer's name and phone number sometime during their first visit.

The second step is for the salesperson to ask to set up an appointment as they are leaving the store, or better yet, to ask if they can come to the customers home to see the project and/or room so that they can better visualize what the customer wants to accomplish.

If they are not willing to set up an appointment when they leave the store, the next step is for the salesperson to give them a call within one week, and ask them how the project is going, ask them if they have any concerns or new thoughts on the project, and then again attempt to set up an appointment for them to return to the store, or set up an appointment to make a visit to their home.

A good lead in for this phone call is for the salesman to tell them that a new product has come in that he thinks will be just right for them, or that he has been thinking about their project and has discovered a product that they did not see when they were in the store that will be just right. The salesperson should have made notes after their first visit as to what room they were doing, the products they liked and disliked, and their questions and concerns. Having credible background information will help them personalize the call, and also will increase the professionalism and credibility of the salesperson. Also important, the salesperson must actually be prepared to show them a new product they did not look at before!

If you or the salesperson receive a “no, or a we're not ready” on this first call, you should ask when would

be a good time to check back. They might say they have postponed the project for a few weeks, and the salesperson should ask permission to call back again in two weeks. Even if permission is not received it would still be a good idea to make that second call. This will demonstrate you are interested in the person as well as the sale, and also that you follow up!

Keep in mind that be-back appointments will be made only with customers that your salesperson has worked in such a way that the customers have valued the help that they received from the salesperson. Many salespeople will say, "I can't control what our customers do" but they need to focus on what they (the salesperson) do, and follow up by contacting that lost customer. In most cases this will require that you or your salesperson do something differently than you have been doing. It is difficult, but I truly believe it will prove to be well worth the effort.

The point is, if you can get the "be-backer" back into the store, your chances of closing are three times higher than they were on their first visit! But don't lose sight of the fact that the first goal is to close as many as you can **on that first visit**.

The salesperson that actively pursues be-backers will be changing from managing what happens to making things happen. This will be reflected in higher sales and higher close percentages, and higher income for both the store and the salesperson.

*Questions comments and feedback are always welcome. Contact: [fred.jaeckle@jaeckledistributors.com](mailto:fred.jaeckle@jaeckledistributors.com)*