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# Closing Is Overrated

## Salespeople should focus on building consultative relationships and selling value

By Jim Peduto

Sales leaders are obsessed with closing. Even movies elevate closing to a mythical status. We've all heard the line, and maybe even implored our salespeople to, "Always be closing" (Alec Baldwin in "Glengarry Glen Ross").

The "State of Inbound 2018" report, which compiled the responses of more than 6,200 leaders from around the world, identified "closing more deals" as the No. 1 priority of sales leaders. Nothing else was even close.

It's no wonder that everyone would like a quick fix. Google the term "sales closing" and you will find: "How To Close A Sale: 7 Closing Techniques And Why They Work", "20 Modern Sales Closing Techniques That Will Help You Win More Sales" and a host of other closing miracles.

However, despite all the fanfare, focusing on closing alone does not work. Here is why.

The data from nearly 2 million evaluations and assessments of salespeople conducted by our partner, Objective Management Group, shows that fewer than 6 percent of all salespeople are strong closers. While elite and strong salespeople do have substantially stronger closing skills than their weaker counterparts, a deeper dive into the differences between the top performers and everyone else reveals that closing competencies play a much smaller role and are far less important than other competencies.

Specifically, we found that strong and elite salespeople excel at the seven sales core competencies that precede closing:

1. Hunter Competency

2. Sales Process Competency
3. Relationship Builder Competency
4. Consultative Seller Competency
5. Value Seller Competency
6. Qualifier Competency
7. Presentation Approach Competency

Salespeople that use a sales process to build consultative relationships with qualified clients and sell value do not need to rely on closing skills to win the deal. Closing is the culmination of events that preceded it. When selling competencies are strong and supported

by the sales process, closing is easy. Closing should be a natural outcome, not an event.

Elite salespeople don't need to save the day with a great close because they have strong competencies across the board. For strong salespeople, the closing competency is merely one part of broadly developed skills. In contrast, when a salesperson's competencies are weak, sales become transactional and closing skills are essential.

Great sales are not the result of magical closing techniques. Sales and profitability growth come from measuring and building sales competencies.

Your No. 1 priority should be the measurable development of your team. You need to know each of your salespeople's competencies (precisely where they need to be strengthened), target training, and measure the improvement. For example, Knowledgeworx clients average a sales capability improvement of 38 percent after targeted sales development.

"Glengarry Glen Ross" had another famous line: "Coffee is for closers." Perhaps, but measurable sales development is for winners. **SM**

