



The Manager Faces
the Yielder Rep
Assertiveness is the Key to
Behavior Modification

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As seen in
MacDonald Advertising
Services
Inside Classified

Unleash
Your Sales DNA®

How do you manage a nice, dedicated sales rep who doesn't sell up to the potential of the market or quota?

In fact, right now you may have similar challenges with some reps; it's the most common type of Sales Call Reluctance®, called the Yielder.

Last month we discussed Yielder behavior, one of 12 types of prospecting avoidance discovered by Behavioral Sciences Research Press, for whom I'm a licensee. Now we'll explore how to coach and manage them.

To recap, Yielders fear appearing pushy or intrusive. Their idea of "pushy or intrusive" goes beyond the realm of the norm, however. They lack both the skills and the courage to assert themselves in appropriate ways.

Avoiding conflict at all cost, they never say no, not even to you. That doesn't mean, however, that they'll actually do what you tell them to do, unless it fits into their unassertive Yielder habits. And when they replay their assertive words to you in describing how they handled a situation, you can place a safe bet it's exaggerated.

What can you do? Just keep pounding your head on your desk in frustration?

Your best strategy begins with helping them become aware of their behavior and how it costs them time and money. Most of them already know this, but they probably don't realize its cost: fewer prospecting calls made, longer sales cycles, more work to get a sale, less likelihood of winning a competitive battle.

Once they own up to their skills need, begin teaching them skills and a new pattern of thinking. The best place to begin is controlling the call.

Yielders will feel and act more assertive just by making sure they lead and control each sales appointment and telephone call. Too frequently they can end up in a question and answer mode, with the customer or prospect in control. That alone sends Yielder reps following versus leading, and their Yielder habits get even stronger.

Next, teach them basic assertiveness techniques. Some examples of situations where you can use your own experience — as well as resources on assertiveness — are:

- What to say when the prospect wants to “think about it”
- How to handle advertisers who want reps to rush over to provide non-urgent service
- How soon to call again when someone doesn’t return a phone call
- How to minimize the abundance of time they may be spending helping their co-workers, at their own and your expense.

What if the manager is the Yielder? Many are. Yielder managers are well-liked, understanding and very supportive. They say things like, “You can’t make enough prospecting calls because your customers need extra service? I understand.”

However, these managers may not set high enough expectations and they can even get run over by their employees. If the rep is highly assertive, or even aggressive, the manager is defeated with her first word.

The solution for Yielder managers? Once again the solution begins with awareness, then with conscious efforts in self-observation and skill practice.

Becoming more assertive can be a life-long journey, but well worth the trek, both in terms of money and personal growth!

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