



## THE BENCHMARK

KEVIN KEHOE

The author, owner-manager of 3PG Consulting, is a 25-year industry veteran. Reach him at kevinkehoe@me.com.

# Coach for revenue growth

In my last column I talked about the first function of a good sales manager—planning and prioritizing the salesman’s time.

In this column, I address the second function of a sales manager—coaching for salesman effectiveness.

I recently rode with a salesman on a call for a Class A Commercial opportunity. I always use the car ride to prepare for the call. Specifically, I wanted to be ready to respond to the prospect’s objections to doing business with me. So I asked the salesman, “What objections might this prospect have to doing business with you?”

He hadn’t really thought about that, he said.

“How do you expect to advance this sale if you don’t know what objections there might be?” I asked. I think he wanted to choke me. “Would you go into a boxing ring knowing little to nothing about the other guy?” I asked him.

“No, of course not,” he said.

“Well, that’s what you’re doing on this call.”

Now he wanted to punch me.

We all want our salespeople to sell more. If they’re not practicing call preparation—specifically, the skill of surfacing and responding to objections—they’ll always sell less than they could. The successful salesman knows the likely objections—in advance.

When selling in the homeowners association/condo/commercial/industrial segments, the objections are fairly predictable: price and change. If we know the objections, why not be prepared to manage them to our benefit?

Best practices for managing objections are validate, explore, recommend and negotiate. Here’s how those play out with the likely objections.

**Price objection: “We like you, but you’re priced too high.”**

**Validate:** “Hmm, yes price is always important when making a decision like this.”

**Explore:** “May I ask you a question? If my price

were within your budget expectations, would we be your first choice for the work? OK, what exactly is the budget range?”

**Recommend:** “Let me make a suggestion. We can meet your budget and address your quality and responsiveness concerns if we update your spec. In fact, I think we might be able to shift some money from weekly maintenance to upgrades. Would you be interested?”

**Negotiate:** Show them using examples of how you can do this.

**Change objection: “It’s hard to train a new contractor.”**

**Validate:** “Hmm, yes making a change is always a challenge and important in making a decision like this.”

**Explore:** “May I ask you a question? What are your primary concerns with changing contractors? Have you had bad experiences in the past?”

**Recommend:** “If I’m hearing you accurately, the first three months of the transition process have never gone well for you? Let’s talk about what we do and if this addresses your concerns.”

**Negotiate:** Show them by using examples of how you do this.

When negotiating, please remember to be brief (role playing preparation helps this greatly). The more you talk, the less they talk. And the more they talk, the greater the probability they’ll get comfortable that you can manage their objections.

So that’s what the salesman and I did the rest of the car ride—we prepped. When he got in front of the prospect, he uncovered their real objections and it made all the difference.

It’s nothing more than the Boy Scout motto: “Be prepared.” Yes, it’s a little old fashioned, but it seems that there’s no school like the old school when it comes to sales.