

Media release  
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## **Mind the gap: Salespeople missing the mark with clients**

- *Eighty-five per cent want salespeople to listen to them during a purchase, but only 39 per cent experienced this*
- *Sixty-one per cent believe asking questions important, but just 25 per cent experienced this*

The vast majority of salespeople are failing to meet the needs of business decision makers according to new research from sales and negotiation experts Huthwaite International.

The national YouGov survey of business decision makers found 85 per cent of respondents believe a good buying experience involves a salesperson listening carefully in order to understand their requirements, however just 39 per cent experienced this during their last significant purchase. The study also showed some 61 per cent believe it is important salespeople ask questions to discover what they need, but just a quarter (25 per cent) experienced this during their last major buy.

All products or services have features that sellers must describe at some point, but salespeople must take care here, with previous Huthwaite research showing that talking about features is only valuable if they are linked to solving a need and desired outcome that a buyer has articulated. When that time comes, the study showed that over half (56 per cent) of buyers like salespeople to talk about the features of the product or service in depth but only 37 per cent experienced this during their last purchase.

Only three per cent of buyers value persistence in their salespeople, but 18 per cent experienced it in their last purchase, suggesting that salespeople would rather keep talking, even when they are saying things the customer is not interested in.

Tony Hughes, CEO at Huthwaite International, comments: "It seems salespeople are getting a 'could do better' score on their report card from buyers. If salespeople aren't listening, it usually means they're talking, often about the product. There's a real danger in this because it means a missed opportunity to discover how they could help the customer. Sellers must take care not to get caught up in the excitement of talking about the bells and whistles their product or service may have – which if irrelevant will be ignored at best and at worst will irritate a potential buyer, lose a potential sale and have a negative affect on the bottom line."

The study also showed that while 43 per cent valued a skilled negotiator, only 22 per cent experienced this in their last purchase.

Says Mr Hughes: "Skilled negotiators can result in a much better experience for both the buyer and the seller. When done properly, both parties leave the table feeling

they have received a good deal, which is the ultimate aim in doing business with someone; it's not about getting everything you want and leaving the other side feeling they've been 'beaten'."

Interestingly, only nine per cent of respondents rated quickly being offered a discount as a good buying experience, suggesting that if a salesperson has the skill to build value for their product or service, then they should be able to sustain their margins.

Mr Hughes comments: "It's an encouraging finding for salespeople that immediate discounting isn't seen as desirable, because no one wants to be involved in a race to the bottom when it comes to pricing. By building value in the mind of the buyer for what they're selling, salespeople can maintain happy clients as well as healthy sales and profits."

## **Ends**

### **About the research:**

The research was carried out for Huthwaite International by YouGov Plc. The total sample size was 559 senior decision makers from all business sizes. Fieldwork was undertaken between 2nd - 6th November 2015. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of British business size.

### **Notes to editors:**

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### **About Huthwaite International**

Huthwaite International is best known as the creator of SPIN<sup>®</sup> Selling – helping salespeople in all countries and most languages to improve their performance. Companies worldwide trust UK-based Huthwaite International, as a leading behavioural change consultancy and owner of the SPIN<sup>®</sup> trademark in over 50 countries, to deliver measurable results through its research-based models.

The company provides innovative skills training and advice for progressive individuals and organisations in sectors such as IT, financial services, healthcare, telecoms, manufacturing, legal and professional services. It has a client list of thousands of companies worldwide and trains some 14,000 people each year.

Besides the SPIN<sup>®</sup> Suite, Huthwaite International offers training and reinforcement based on its own original research models in negotiation skills, communication skills, customer service skills. Established in 1974, Huthwaite is headquartered in Wentworth, South Yorkshire and handles international projects through its national offices or associated companies throughout Europe, USA, South Africa and Asia Pacific. The company has won two Queen's Awards in 1999 and 2008 for International trade.

For more information on Huthwaite's cost-effective services and solutions, please visit [www.huthwaite.co.uk](http://www.huthwaite.co.uk).