

SANDLER RULE #37

ALL PROSPECTS LIE,
ALL THE TIME

Have you ever wondered why a prospect led you down the wrong path?

- It's true – they do!
- The variable is *why* ... and *about* what.

Okay, it may be a bit of an overstatement to say that *all* prospects lie *all* the time. But the underlying idea is sound, and worth considering closely.

Let's just say that prospects tend to be less than completely truthful *much* of the time. For example, one prospect proclaims that he is the decision maker, but doesn't reveal that he has to get an approving nod from the CFO. Another prospect says she is eager to move quickly, but doesn't disclose that the timing for the final decision is still three months away.

DON'T BE MISLED.

WHY DO PROSPECTS LIE?

Many prospects feel that it's necessary to mislead salespeople in this manner. Perhaps they believe they are protecting themselves from the

sometimes overeager salesperson who is ready to pounce at the first sign of a “buying signal.” Or perhaps they are covering up vulnerable areas – not the least of which is probably an unwillingness to admit that there are areas they don’t know very much about.

To avoid being misled, you will need to ask a few questions to confirm just about everything your prospect tells you. If the prospect says he is the decision maker, ask who else might play a role in the decision ... or who has the power to veto a decision. For the prospect who is eager to move quickly, ask how soon she needs to make a decision ... and what might happen if it took longer.

The television show *House* offers the example of Dr. Gregory House, a cynical physician with an abiding distrust of patients – a distrust rooted in his firm belief in the willingness of all patients to lie. House knows, from personal experience, that patients are more than willing to mislead the people who are trying to help them, even when their own lives are at stake. “It’s a basic truth of the human condition that everybody lies,” Dr. House opines in one episode. “The only variable is about what.” The parallel between patients and prospects almost makes itself.

No. You shouldn’t use House’s contempt for his patients as your model for behavior in interacting with prospects – but you probably should use his skepticism. Prospects may not lie all the time, but if you proceed as if they did, and then confirm each and every piece of information you receive, you are likely to come away with a more accurate picture of your selling opportunity.

**TEST YOUR
UNDERSTANDING**

HOW CAN ASSUMING THAT
“ALL PROSPECTS LIE”
SUPPORT A PRODUCTIVE
RELATIONSHIP WITH
PROSPECTS?

SEE ANSWER BELOW.

BEHAVIORS

IDENTIFY THREE INSTANCES WHERE DOUBLE-CHECKING THE FACTS, SUCH AS A PROSPECT'S PROCLAMATION, “I MAKE ALL THE DECISIONS” OR “MONEY'S NO OBJECT,” WOULD HAVE BEEN USEFUL TO YOU.

Answer: This strategy requires you to double-check what prospects tell you (or what you believe they told you). Assuming “all prospects lie” will prevent you from acting on false assumptions and misunderstandings.