



## Point of View

### How to Say Goodbye!

by Joanne S. Black

**W**hen it comes to difficult customers, you know the warning signs—they nickel-and-dime you on price, don't return phone calls, tell you they're the decision makers when they're not, threaten you with your competitors, make unreasonable demands, and expect fast, complete, and reliable delivery of your service.

I call those customers PITAs: "pain in the ass" customers. PITA customers are never happy. They're emotionally draining and they use up your valuable resources. Collect too many PITA customers and watch your profits dwindle—not a compelling scenario. Yet companies continue to accept this bad business, all the while thinking it's better than no business. But is it?

When organizations take bad business, they are paying a hidden opportunity cost—the opportunity lost to use their resources to go after the phenomenal clients they want and *need* to make money! Servicing a PITA customer takes away time we could use providing something extra for our truly great customers.

How is it we end up with a few customers that drive us crazy when we can see the warning signs a mile away? Sometimes it's because we have a quota to meet, or our company insists we do a deal, or we think that we can turn a bad situation into a good one. We're dreaming. Bad business is bad business. Period.

Salespeople frequently say that they will sell to "anyone who fogs a mirror." Avoid that kind of thinking. We shouldn't target just "anyone." "Anyone" all too frequently turns out to be a PITA customer, the one who plays the nickel-and-dime game.

You need to create a profile of your "Ideal Customer" so you can recognize perfect opportunities when they arise. These Ideal Customers are those you want to serve and the ones you will bend head over heels for. You will also use this profile when you are asking people to refer you. Think of yourself as an artist—the more color and lines you put in your description, the easier it will be for others to recognize the picture of your Ideal Customer and refer them to you.

For a lot of salespeople, being too specific in describing their Ideal Customer may seem like they might be leaving good business on the table. We often think that if we don't mention everything we do we'll miss a sale. This is exactly the opposite of what happens. The more specific you are, the easier it will be for someone to refer you. A long list of the things you do blurs your image. For someone to be able to refer you, they need a clear picture of you.

---

*How is it we end up with a few customers that drive us crazy when we can see the warning signs a mile away?*

---



Create a description using the following categories:

**Industry:** In what industry does your company have a track record?

**Geography:** Where would these customers be based—regions of the United States, North America, Europe, Asia, Middle East, Africa?

**Size Company:** How large would the company you would most like to work with be and how do you measure its size (i.e.: number of employees, revenue, age, geographical coverage)?

**Business Unit or Function:** What group of people within the company are your ideal contacts—CEOs, CIOs, COOs, HR, marketing?

**Type of Person:** What are the personality traits (sense of humor, responsible, dedicated, integrity) of your “Ideal Customer?”

**Situation/Need:** “What sort of situation is your ideal customer in that creates the need for your help? Here are some ideas: *“My salespeople aren’t performing, our teams are not working together, we’ve just acquired another company, we have difficulty recruiting the right talent, we don’t have enough clients, our systems are at capacity, we’ll be acquiring more companies.”*

---

*The more specific you are, the easier it will be for someone to refer you.*

---

And if a prospect doesn’t meet your criteria: Say NO! A PITA prospect is just the beginning of a bad relationship. The downward spiral will have begun. The cost to you will be exorbitant—your resources will be drained, you won’t make money, and you will have lost the opportunity to focus on good business. Say “No!” and a big weight will be lifted off of your shoulders. And, I’ll bet that your “Ideal Customer” will be right there waiting for you.

---

## Take the first step...

**Build a referral system that will leave your competition in the dust.**

**Call Joanne Black at No More Cold Calling™ NOW! 415-461-8763.**



Joanne S. Black

*Joanne Black is America’s leading authority on referral selling and the author of **No More Cold Calling™ The Breakthrough System That Will Leave Your Competition in the Dust**, from Warner Business Books. She developed her No More Cold Calling practice in 1996 and now reaches thousands of people each year. Her Referral Selling System has increased the performance of many top companies including: California State Automobile Association, CCH Knowledge Point, Charles Schwab, Colliers International, KPMG, The Marlin Company, and The Mechanics Bank.*