

Letting the Customer Off the Hook: A Novel Influence Tactic for Establishing Customer Trust

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Abstract

In this paper, we seek to introduce Unhooking as novel influence tactic to sales research. We define Unhooking as a salesperson's explicit statement to the customer that the salesperson seeks to support the customer's decision autonomy, such that the customer can optimally satisfy their needs. This paper builds on a field experiment with an insurance agency, +120 participants and four experimental conditions. Results of logistic regression show a positive effect of a light version of Unhooking on customers' purchase intention, but not of explicitly communicated Unhooking. Thus, showing that Unhooking light may be a viable, effective influence strategy for salespeople. Furthermore, we perform a one-way ANOVA to show significant differences in customers' search intention, pointing to potential ambivalent effects of salespeople's Unhooking. Our study contributes to sales research and practice by identifying a new effective trust-building strategy for salespeople.

Subject Areas: *Customer Relationship Management and Customer Satisfaction, Customer Satisfaction and Delight, Sales Force*

Track: Sales Management and Personal Selling