

# Inside

## BUSINESS

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## The Canterbury Sales®

### The Tale of The Sunny Day Used Car

By Andy Gole

Did you ever buy a used car? If so, do you remember what the weather was like that day?

More than 20 years ago I bought a used VW Squareback for \$900 on a beautiful sunny day. It was a great car. It met my budget and gave me what I needed: 25 miles per gallon, 4 doors, hand crank moon roof, 30,000 miles on the odometer.

Several months later, I was driving the *sunny day used car* in the hills of Binghamton, New York. It was not a sunny day and the rain was pouring from the sky, pounding on the roof of the car. It was raining outside the car and, as you may have guessed by now, it was raining inside the car, as well.

I had made this classic mistake:

*I bought an old, used car on a sunny day.*

The car had rust and sheet metal perforations in the body that were not obvious until it poured "cats and dogs."

Imagine how I felt that day. There was three inches of water in the driver's well. I was cold, wet and uncomfortable. I felt stupid.

This experience was so searing, it led to a family proverb: "Never buy a used car on a

sunny day."

I know that you have never done anything as foolish as buying a *sunny day used car*. But all of your prospects and clients have done so. They have bought their own version of a *sunny day used car*.

As a result, they are very skeptical when we sell to them. In fact, they do not believe what we say. So buyers hesitate in making commitment. They are concerned about being defrauded again, or perhaps losing their job over a bad decision.

This makes it necessary for us to have a strong program that substantiates our points in a sales call. We need to be "loaded for bear" with public relations articles, testimonial letters, case histories, before and after pictures, etc.

And we need to prove ourselves early in the sales process. When prospects listen to our statements, they classify them as either facts or opinions. Opinions they can safely ignore. We need our statements to be taken as facts – facts on which the prospect will act.

This much may be fairly straightforward. What is not obvious is how such skepticism

will affect prospects' openness with salespeople.

Prospects may wind up saying things we want to hear at the moment, but which are not necessarily related to closing a sale.

Salespeople may be skeptical as buyers (say, when you buy a car). But are you as skeptical when you persuade? Do you make it a point to test a prospect's answers, as you may test a new car or stereo?

This is crucial to achieving sales success. You need to be a skeptic. Many salespeople fail because they do not test the information provided by a prospect.

The best evidence is to watch what a prospect does, not just listen to what the prospect says. Look for evidence the prospect is engaged in "getting to know you." Examples could include: visiting your facility, checking references, providing guidance in structuring a proposal, or introducing you to other team members.

Otherwise, you might just wind up "buying" a *sunny day used car*.

