



# Nail it Down

## Reading Clients Can Help Increase Sales

*By: Steve Brainerd, Founder & President of Durham Group, Inc.*

Have you ever stacked a hay wagon? I remember the first time I did. It was at a farm near my home in southeast Kansas, just over the Oklahoma border. With enthusiasm, I slammed those bales on the wagon, one after another. I was able to get 25 bales on the wagon. It should have been 60.

The farmer taught me quickly and sternly that when stacking hay, you need to be systematic and make sure each bale is secured before stacking the next one.

Like stacking a hay wagon, in selling, from the moment we exchange pleasantries to the securing of the check or purchase order, our prospect's thinking takes many twists and turns, and it is important to be in concert with them all the way. We need to utilize the "naildown," and use them regularly.

What is a naildown? A naildown is a question asked during the selling process to get a yes response. Let me give you an example: Three years ago, I was giving a seminar at a hotel. Following the session, a gentleman came in and introduced himself. He had just given a sales preview in the room across the hall. "Jim" worked for a referral-based marketing group. He began with what he thought was a "killer" question: "How would you like to get up tomorrow morning knowing you would never have to do another day's work in your life?"

He quickly went on from there, and that was a mistake. From that point, all I could think about was the exit sign. He neglected to use a naildown.

Here's what he didn't know: Both my father and grandfather were engineers with active careers in inventions, research and problem solving. Each ended up retiring early. I observed and felt the painful internal frustration that can occur when we are not fed daily with challenges. So when Jim asked me that question, how do you think I felt? The picture he painted wasn't a pretty one for me.

Let's roll back the film. Suppose that, after Jim asked the question, he used a naildown by saying, "That would be a nice picture to be in, wouldn't it?" I might have said, "not really," but even if I didn't, the expression on my face would have told all. And from that, Jim would have had an opportunity to draw back and direct another question that might better hit a chord with me.

Let's think about our own experiences. Have you ever been in a situation where you have done your homework, asked the prospect the right question, built rapport, listened but gradually began to lose them?

So what can we do if we want to employ the naildown effectively? First, I recommend you read the "tie-down" section of Tom Hopkins' book, *How to Master the Art of Selling*. It is the most comprehensive source on this topic I have seen.

Next, practice. As important as naildowns are, they can be overused, or not used effectively. This can turn people off. But in time, if we keep using the naildown, we'll incorporate our own wording and style and become more adroit.

Every time we are face to face with a prospect, we should take the time to use the naildown and get those valuable readings along the way. If we do, we will do a better job "stacking our wagon" and increasing our yield.

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