



# Want to sell more? **Stop Un-selling!**

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## Snatching Defeat from the Jaws of Victory

In this article, we'll define "unselling", and discuss how and why it happens. Then, we'll teach you how to avoid it by using "Discovery" before you "Fulfill" which will help you close more deals! Let's start with a short story to illustrate how often this happens ... and how we don't realize it when it's happening!

Bill and Lorie Talbot, now in their early 50's, are in the market for a prime lakeshore property where they hope to build their dream retirement home. Bill and Lorie have the motivation and the funds necessary to purchase something exceptional, but they are understandably cautious buyers. This may be the most significant buying decision they will ever make, and they have to get it right.

Clark, a realtor specializing in recreational properties, has invited the Talbots to view a gorgeous stretch of lakeshore property on a pristine lake in northern Minnesota, and initially, the Talbots are wowed. This plot of land sits on a point offering almost a 360-degree view of the lake, appropriately treed and sloped, with a perfect beachfront for easy lake access. Clark has had this property listed for nearly 10 months now, and it should have sold sooner. However, because the property should fetch a premium price, the property owner has made it clear to Clark that he is firm on the number, so the price alone limits the number of qualified buyers.

The Talbots, who are indeed qualified buyers, are clearly impressed. They're giving off many buying signals that suggest that they're ready to make an offer. Then as they walk north along the shoreline, Bill asks Clark a curious question, "Clark, can you waterski on this lake?"

Clark's offers an exuberant response. "Oh, my yes. In fact, this is one of the top lakes in the area for skiers. The bay to the east is smooth like a sheet of glass most mornings. Do you see the yellow cabin across the bay?" Clark asks pointing east. "They've got three teenage boys who are all terrific skiers, and last year they built a ramp jump that they are happy to share with others. It's as good a skiing lake as you'll find in this area."

The change of expression on Bill's face said it all. "Well, that's disappointing to hear. As beautiful as this spot is, it's out of the question. One of the issues we have with our current cabin on Sugar

Lake is the constant hassles we have with the waterskiers. The noisy drone of the boat motors, and the continuous wake sloshing the shoreline. Lorie and I find it so annoying. We sure don't want to sink this kind of money into a property where we're going to deal with the same kind of issues."

In a matter of seconds, what seemed like a done deal has suddenly evaporated ... one that Clark will scramble unsuccessfully to rescue. Clark will try to minimize the impact of the water skiing reference with comments like, "not that often," or "mostly those weeks when that family is up here," but the damage is done, and in this case, it is irreversible. Clark was a victim of "un-selling."

## **What is "Un-Selling"?**

Un-selling can be defined as anything a seller says or does that is more damaging than helpful. Think of it as a mistake that places the sale at risk. A salesman was once heard to say, "I had the sale in the bag, and then I said more than I should have, and I bought it back."

Un-selling can occur at any stage of the sales process, from the initial approach through the final moments when closing the sale seems imminent. Putting the impact of "un-selling" in perspective, consider the effort the seller may have made to make the cold calls necessary to identify and engage the interested prospect. Consider the time and effort required of the seller to research the prospect, conduct multiple meetings with the prospect, and the significant work and energy required to create and present a formal proposal. Consider that despite the many hours of time and effort invested, the sale can implode needlessly in a few seconds because of one careless comment.

## **The Most Common Examples of Un-selling**

There are countless examples, but here are the three that occur most frequently:

1. Flawed or incomplete Discovery work
2. Conflicting comments
3. Responses so predictable that they destroy credibility

## Flawed or Incomplete Discovery Work

Most sales professionals are quick to acknowledge the importance of asking the right questions, gathering the relevant information, qualifying, and understanding the buyer's needs. In reality, only a small percentage of sellers are really thorough in their Discovery process. Good question-asking requires command of content, phrasing, and sequencing. Missing key questions that really need to be asked, but aren't, phrasing questions so poorly that the buyer only gives half of the answer, or mistiming when a question is or isn't asked, can all lead to missing information that can cause us to lose a deal.

The solution or value proposition needs to be presented in a way that aligns with buyer needs and motivations. If that information is missing, the buyer finds reasons not to buy. In some ways, this is the worst form of un-selling, because absent the information they need, the seller assumes the call is going better than it really is. The seller doesn't know what he or she doesn't know, because the prospect isn't saying!

Many sellers hate the idea of pre-planning and memorizing their selling questions, fearful that they will come off as phony or mechanical. Others prefer to see where the call goes, essentially making up their questions as they go along.

Some operate from a set of qualifying questions, often aimed at a widely held belief that good discovery means identifying need, authority, and money. Nothing wrong with that, except that many sellers DO qualify need, authority, and money, but miss the nuanced questions that get to the subtle, but critical elements that influence final decisions and make or break the deal. When the Discovery work is flawed or incomplete, the probability that un-selling will occur is nearly 100%.

## Conflicting Comments

When Clark boasted about the lake being a prime spot for waterskiing he made a conflicting comment. In this case, he promoted something that was in direct conflict with the buyer's agenda.

Operating with incomplete or flawed Discovery (our first point), Clark answered the buyer's question in a manner more damaging than helpful. Sellers who make conflicting comments

typically do so because hear the buyer make a reference to something and feel compelled to respond immediately in some way, rather than asking the simple question “Why do you ask?” or “Is waterskiing important to you and your family?”

For example, with proper discovery or with a simple follow-up question from the seller, the buyers might have revealed that they have teenage grandkids who will enjoy spending time at the lake. Based on that reference the seller might say something like, “Well, they’ll love it up here. There’s so much to do. There’s a movie theatre in town and a pool hall where the kids like to hang out, not to mention the ice cream shop. The nearby town also has several community celebrations each summer. And this lake is not only great for swimming and fishing, it’s a fabulous lake for water skiing.” This again, is likely to risk unselling!

Consider all of the potential fragments of information imbedded in that response that could potentially conflict with yet-to-be-discovered elements of the buyer’s agenda. If it concerns Bill and Lorie that their grandkids might want to hang at the pool hall, or spend a fortune on ice cream, for example, then the potential for un-selling went well beyond the water-skiing reference. So again, a follow-up question would be needed to ensure further knowledge of the buyer’s agenda.

## **Trust Destroying Predictability**

During the Discovery process buyers often make references to other products or solutions they are currently considering, or products and solutions they have purchased in the past that didn’t measure up to their expectations.

Imagine that one of the Talbots commented that they have been disappointed that they haven’t made better use in the winter months of the cabin they currently own. Suppose this was Clark’s response: “You’ll find that this property offers a lot of good reasons to visit during the winter. And it’s easy to get to. They have a plowing service that does a great job of keeping the roads clear. The wood-burning stove not only smells great, but it keeps fuel costs in check.”

Maybe these factors would give the Talbots reasons to be excited about winter visits. But what if the primary reason they haven’t used their cabin much in the winter has been Bill’s work schedule, having nothing to do with roads being cleared or which fuel to burn? The Talbots may start to view Clark with less respect because they realize, “no matter what we say or bring up, you’ve got

an answer for it that's always perfect. You want to make the sale, and your primary objective is to say what you think we want to hear whether it matters to us or not."

Many sellers function this way, and their repeated need to supply superlative information about the product or solution is usually a "turn-off" to buyers because it's too predictable.

## **The Discovery/Fulfillment Sales Discipline Reduces the Risks for Un-selling**

The examples of un-selling in this article all resulted when the seller violated one or more of the key elements of the Discovery/Fulfillment® disciplined selling process (see [Mrocektraining.com](http://Mrocektraining.com)). The Discovery/Fulfillment discipline governs the relationship and timing between what the seller learns about the buyer (Discovery), and what the seller communicates to the buyer (Fulfillment). Nearly everyone who sells is at various times a victim of "bouncing;" moving sloppily between Discovery work and Fulfillment work in ways that make the seller vulnerable to mistakes that un-sell.

Each occasional, undisciplined "bounce" to Fulfillment potentially places the success of the sales call at risk. When the timing, sequence, and flow of the call is mismanaged, the seller will almost inevitably risk saying or doing something that will make the buyer "un-buy." The good news is that most un-selling mistakes are avoidable. They are avoidable IF the seller understands the Discovery/Fulfillment Process and possesses the skills and discipline required to complete the Discovery work before Fulfilling, often in the face of pressure from impatient buyers, buyers that ask many questions, and buyers who seem to push the seller into Fulfillment. Stay committed to the Discovery Fulfillment Process and you will improve your close rate!