

VAIL RESORTS®

The Snowsports
Instructor's Guide To

MORE RETURNS & REQUESTS

by KELLY COFFEY

*Customer-Focused Sales Skills That
Make You A Better Instructor*



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Chapter 4:

Communicate the Best Fit

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to explain the best options by using features, benefits, and motivations.
- 4 keys to dangling a delicious carrot.
- The simplest thing you can do to increase your returns and requests.

What Do You Sell?

Communicating the best fit: this is the part of the sales process most instructors think of as “selling.” Yet this step is only the visible ten-percent of the sales process for snowsports instructors. Everything you did up to this point is the vital underwater part of this sales iceberg.

Let’s review the sales process up to this point. Step one: you know your product (everything you offer of value as an instructor) inside and out. Step two: you’ve assessed your client’s underlying needs and motivations. If you did those two steps right, it should be clear to you what is the best fit between the product and customer.

Do steps one and two correctly, and step three should fall into place. You’re simply laying out the opportunity.

But know this: that opportunity is obvious to you... but it’s not necessarily obvious to your client. It’s worth repeating: the opportunity is obvious to you, but it’s not necessarily obvious to your client. Don’t lose an easy return client because you assume your client sees the connection between his goals and the benefits of another lesson.

This is where your communication skills come into play. Your job during this step of the sales process is to communicate that fit to your client. You are selling the solution to your client’s needs. Your goal during this step is to lay out the opportunity so clearly that your client sees the benefits of another lesson as obviously as you do.

“There is only one way to get anybody to do anything. And that is by making the other person want to do it.”

-Dale Carnegie

“Your goal is to lay out the opportunity so clearly that your client sees the benefits of another lesson as obviously as you do.”

The Restaurant Recommendation

Imagine your client asks you to recommend a nice local restaurant. You quickly think of your favorite place, picturing the great meal you had the last time you went. You talk excitedly about the meal you ordered, the service of the waiter, and the great atmosphere.

You're selling that restaurant, and you're doing it with passion and without fear of rejection. Recommending a restaurant is easy for us all.

What if you could train yourself to persuade clients to return for more lessons as easily as you recommend restaurants? Your success rate would skyrocket.

LET'S ANALYZE THE PERSUASION ELEMENTS INVOLVED IN RECOMMENDING A RESTAURANT:

- You have expert knowledge on the subject.
- You believe in the product.
- You know your client's needs.
- You're confident that you're helping your client.
- You lay out the opportunity.
- You communicate with passion.
- You expect success.

You don't get stressed about selling that restaurant because you have a genuine desire to help your client... in this case to have a great dinner. Your client is happy to be sold on that restaurant because he has a need (to find a good restaurant) and you're an expert on the subject (because you ate there).

Suddenly, when you promote your own services, the fear of rejection creeps in. You fear that you're "selling" something and you fear your clients don't want what you offer.

Train yourself to think of selling the next lesson the same way you recommend a restaurant. You're doing your clients a favor because you're helping them create better vacations.

Features, Benefits, and Motivations

In order to convince your client to take another lesson with you, it's important that you communicate what is important to the client. To do that, you must know the difference between features and benefits. It's also important to link the benefits to your client's motivations.

A feature is an element of your lesson. Six hours with an instructor is a feature of an all day lesson. Lift line privileges are a feature. Alone, features don't do much to convince clients to come back.

But attach benefits to features, and now you're talking. A benefit describes why a feature is good for the client. Lift line privileges means less time waiting for a chairlift and more time skiing. Here are more examples of features and benefits for a full day private lesson:

FEATURE	BENEFIT	MOTIVATION
Just you with the instructor	More individualized attention. Going at your exact pace. Going on all the runs you want to do.	"I want to improve as fast as possible."
Lift line privileges	Less time wasted getting back up the hill. More time to ski or ride.	"I'm only out here a couple days. I want to get as much riding in as I can."
Flexible start time and location	The instructor will meet you when and where it's most convenient to you. Makes your morning so much easier.	"I have to get the whole family ready in the morning. It's so hard to get myself out the door on time."
Six hours long	Plenty of time to go anywhere on the mountain, practice drills, eat anywhere for lunch.	"I want to explore the mountain."

In your mind, the benefits of a lesson's features may be obvious. But it might not be obvious to your client. Make sure you clearly communicate the benefits of each feature and tie that to your client's motivations.

Rattling off features that don't have any tie to your client's motivations is just a waste of words.



Dangle the Carrot

We all know carrots are great for the eyes. Let your client see the value of another lesson by “dangling the carrot.”

This means you tell your client you’ll do something during the next lesson that will help convince her to sign up for that lesson. Carrots could be (but are not limited to): going down their first blue or black run, learning a new technique, going in the race course or terrain park, seeing a new part of the mountain, or having lunch at a new restaurant.

But you just can’t throw out carrots willy-nilly. You won’t succeed if you say you’ll hit the terrain park and your client mentioned nothing about freestyle. Though the actual dangling will take place towards the end of the lesson, you need to plan your carrots at the very start.

HERE’S HOW TO MAKE YOUR CARROTS WORK:

- Plan the carrot from the beginning of the lesson.
- Use a carrot that is tied to your client’s goals.
- Pace the day so you have something in your bag to offer tomorrow.
- Use carrots every lesson.



How Many Clients Have You Lost Because You Didn't Invite Them Back?

One January afternoon, a guest named Pam came up to Dave Gregory, a supervisor at Vail. She had taken a lesson the day before and had nothing but great things to say about the instructor and the lesson. She went into detail about what she accomplished with the instructor, how much fun she had, and how much she now loves the sport.

"So are you going to take another lesson?" Dave asked Pam.

"Oh, no," she said. "I don't want to slow him down."

Pam assumed that her instructor didn't want to ski with her. She thought that because she could only ski green runs, that her instructors would rather have the day off and ski fast on much harder runs... or at least get some new clients that were much better than her. Even though her lesson went beyond her expectations, Pam didn't want to take another lesson because she didn't want to impose on her instructor.

That instructor lost a return student only because he didn't invite Pam back.

Pam isn't unique among lesson-takers. Her assumption is far more common from your guests than you might think. Instructors are expert skiers and riders who love to rip around

the mountain on the hardest terrain. Why would experts want to hang around with beginners and intermediates? Many guests don't put two and two together to realize that instructors make their living from repeat customers.

If you've taught your fair share of lessons, it's likely that you lost a returning client only because you didn't invite him or her back. Though many things about lessons seem obvious to you, and go without saying, they're not always obvious to your guests. Don't leave anything to chance. Clearly communicate the benefits of future lessons and that by returning tomorrow, both you and your guests will have a better day.

What Does "Invite Them Back" Mean?

Ski instructor Brett Gagnon earned the most returns and requests among all Beaver Creek instructors during the '08-'09 season. Yet, it's not just the promise of a larger paycheck that motivates him. Brett measures the quality of his lessons by the number of people who return (since it's the client who is the judge of quality). He also sees the opportunity to get people back for another day as a better chance to expose them to the sport, mountain, and lifestyle he loves.

To increase the chances of return clients, Brett makes sure he invites his clients back every lesson. But he doesn't just do it at the end of the lesson. He begins the day that way.

"One of my responsibilities to you is to bring you back for another lesson," Brett tells each of his clients when he first meets them. He then encourages his clients to let him know if he's not delivering the type of lesson that would make them want to come back. Brett finds the transparency empowers his clients to partner with him in creating the perfect lesson. "If you can share it with them up front, then it's going to be easier to deliver on those needs and wants," Brett said. "All of a sudden they open up to you."

One January day Brett taught an adult class lesson. One of his students was a 75-year old cancer survivor named Arthur. He was weakened from chemotherapy treatments, but still had set aside five days at Beaver Creek to learn to ski.

Brett introduced the class lesson in his normal way, by stating his goal of delivering a lesson that gets them to return. This showed to Arthur that this instructor was interested in creating a lasting relationship, not just a single-day of work.

Arthur opened up to Brett, telling the instructor what his goals were for this vacation. "What Arthur saw was someone who could help him on his journey," Brett said. After that class lesson, Arthur booked Brett for private lessons for the remaining four days of his vacation. That allowed Brett to cater specifically to Arthur's unique needs due to the chemotherapy.

"If you can start off by inviting them back, that helps set up the whole day," Brett said.



You must first build trust with your client before you lay out the opportunity for another lesson. Selling without trust is being pushy. Selling with trust is serving your client.

Expect Success

YOU WILL HAVE FAR MORE SUCCESS WHEN—AT THE START OF EVERY LESSON—YOU ASSUME THAT YOUR CLIENTS WILL WANT TO TAKE ANOTHER LESSON. HERE'S WHY:

- Your confidence will show through and your clients will respond favorably.
- You'll have an easier time doing the hard stuff (i.e. asking for the sale).
- You'll overcome your fear of rejection.
- You'll have so much more fun during the day.

Train your mindset to expect success. The best thing you can do is to recognize that your client is better off skiing or riding with you than without you. With all that you offer your clients (coach, guide, motivator, friend, safety net, problem-solver), you should feel sorry for the skier or boarder who doesn't have a chance to spend the day with you.

By being genuinely excited about sharing your love of snowsports with your clients, that excitement will show through and will be the best thing to convince clients to return for more lessons. Turn expecting success into a habit. At the start of each day see yourself delivering the perfect lesson and your clients eagerly wanting more. With enough practice, this mindset will become the default—even without you trying.

The Simplest Thing You Can Do To Increase Your Returns And Requests: Get The Commitment

As part of your “expecting success” mentality, you should know exactly what you will do when your client agrees to a new lesson. Getting to “Yes” is not the end of the process. Your day isn’t done until you secure the commitment with your client. This might mean walking your client to the sales desk, calling up the reservationist yourself, or notifying your supervisor. However you choose to accomplish this task, your client needs to know that tomorrow’s lesson is already taken care of.

BY SECURING THE COMMITMENT, YOU ACCOMPLISH TWO THINGS:

1. You provide good customer service: you take one task off your client’s plate, and prevent your client from standing in one more line in the morning.
2. Your client is less inclined to back out should something happen between today and tomorrow.

Even though your client told you he would come back the next day, there are a million reasons why he might be a no-show: he’s sore from the day before... he stayed out late and wants to sleep in... the weather looks bad and he’s not motivated... the kids need extra attention this morning....

When your client commits to tomorrow’s lesson, make sure you seal the deal right away. A lot happens between the afternoon when your client is excited about the next day’s lesson and the next morning when he was supposed to show up.

The excitement your client feels right after a successful lesson may be a vastly different feeling than when he wakes up in the morning cold, sore, or tired.

Walk your client to the lesson sales desk. Or better yet, call up the ski school reservationist and book the lesson on behalf of your client. Your client will appreciate the extra care you put into this, and you’re securing that higher level of commitment.

This simple act may be the easiest thing you do to increase your returns and requests.

When Do I Make The Sale?

Trust is the #1 factor that tells you it’s the right time to make the sale. The key here is you must first build trust with your client before you lay out the opportunity for another lesson. Selling without trust is being pushy. Selling with trust is serving your client.

How do you know when you’ve built trust?

When your client begins to open up to you. Listen for a noticeable shift in your client’s conversation and answers to your questions. This is when your client responds to your questions with deeper and more personal answers (the one’s you’ve been waiting for). This usually happens after three things occur:

1. **YOU’VE BUILT RAPPORT**
2. **YOU’VE SHOWN THAT YOU CARE ABOUT YOUR CLIENT AS A PERSON**
3. **YOU’VE DELIVERED ON AT LEAST PART OF YOUR CLIENT’S GOALS FOR THE LESSON**



Action Plan:

- 1** When you get clients to return for more lessons, ask them why they decided to return. Make a habit of doing this for every return client. They will give you the answers for persuading more clients to come back.
- 2** Talk to an instructor with less experience than you. Tell him or her what you do to convince your clients to come back for another lesson.
- 3** Go to your snowsports school sales desk and find out all the ways you can finalize the lesson for clients who want to come back. What phone numbers can you call? What information do you need? Does the client need to be there? What are the different procedures for class lessons and private lessons?