

## You know what they say about assuming

By [Dan Norman](#) | Published September 21, 2009

*Top Ten Selling*

If you're in the sales profession then you've probably already been trained on the assumptive close. In fact, most of you are probably very good at it. The principle behind the "assumptive close" technique is that you attempt to complete or "close" a sale by assuming as though the customer has already made the decision to buy! That's why it's called the "assumptive close."

For example, let's say you're a car salesman. You've talked to a customer on the phone about a brand new Pontiac Aztec that you have at your car dealership. The car has everything the customer wants, and she is coming in that afternoon to test drive it. By the time she arrives, the car has been serviced, washed and her name is prominently displayed on a huge "sold" tag that covers the entire windshield. You've completed the order form, and all she needs to do is sign it. She sees the car, is overwhelmed with its beauty, signs the order, jumps in the car and does *Dukes of Hazard* doughnuts in the parking lot before tearing into traffic.

I wish I had been that good at it!

One morning, when I was just starting out in sales at Motorola, I received a call from a fellow sales representative in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He told me a man named Charles "Chuck" Michael Brown of CMB Pulpwood Company in Calhoun had called him. Mr. Brown bought a new logging truck and called the Motorola office in Chattanooga to find out how much a two-way truck radio would cost. Mr. Brown was told that the communications consultant from Rome, Georgia would call him back.

I decided to practice the "assumptive close" as I learned to do it in sales school. I wrote up an order form ready for Mr. Brown's signature and began calling to make an appointment to see him. He was out in the field a lot so I left several messages on his answering machine asking him to call me. A couple of days passed and I still hadn't heard back from Mr. Brown, but the completed order was on the corner of my desk, ready for a signature, so I kept calling. While I was at lunch one day, our office assistant saw the order on my desk, assumed that I had finally sold something and processed the order for shipment. Off and on over the next week I continued to leave messages and play phone tag with Mr. Brown. We never actually spoke, much less scheduled an appointment.

Unknown to me, the two-way radio was delivered the following week along with an invoice for \$1,200.

My phone rang. It was Mr. Brown. He said one thing, "Meet me at the Waffle House in Calhoun at 11:00 a.m.!"

"Yes, sir," I said.

I couldn't find the order I had written up, but I figured I would write a new one when I got there. I jumped into my car and headed for Calhoun. I realized within a few minutes I had forgotten to ask which Waffle House in Calhoun, but I was comforted thinking, "How many could there be?" It's a known fact that there are more Waffle Houses than Baptist churches in some communities in Georgia. Such was the case in Calhoun. Standing in front of the first Waffle House I went to, I could actually see two more of them, but only one church. I was 30 minutes late before I found the Waffle House with a CMB Pulpwood Company truck parked out front. I walked in with my hand outstretched and a big smile on my face.

Now remember – I didn't know the order had been mistakenly processed, let alone that Mr. Brown had already received the two-way radio along with an invoice. I thought I was meeting him to make my first sale. I didn't even know what Mr. Brown looked like and introduced myself to three people before he stood and said, "Hey, over here!"

I walked over, shook his hand, introduced myself, reached for a business card and was about to sit down when abruptly he got up and walked out. I stood there watching through the window as he went to his truck, opened the passenger door, pulled out a Motorola box, walked to my beige Chevy Nova and firmly deposited the box on the hood of my car. Then he stormed back inside, handed me a piece of paper that appeared to be an invoice from Motorola and headed back out of the restaurant.

At that point, the waitress shouted, "Chuck, here's your bill!"

"The Motorola man is paying it," Chuck growled.

As Mr. Brown passed my car, I guess he didn't feel like he had deposited the Motorola box on my hood firmly enough because he picked it up and deposited it a bit more firmly. Twice! Then he got in his truck and drove away.

Inside, a deathly hush came over the crowd. No one was eating. There were two waitresses standing dumbstruck behind the counter in the "order-yelling spot" but not yelling orders to the cook. Even the cook had stopped — mid-waffle — to see what was going on. Everyone was quiet and all were staring, wide-eyed, open-mouthed, forks of hash browns midway between plates and mouths, directly at me.

I was the object of everyone's attention and could think of nothing to say to ease the tension except, "Next time he orders crispy bacon, make sure it's crispy!"

No one laughed. I realized that not only was I a bad salesperson, but I was an even worse stand-up comedian. Embarrassed, with sweat breaking out on my forehead, I paid the bill and left as quickly as I could. Once I was in my car and away from the scene, I pieced it all together — the order form that had disappeared from my desk, the Motorola box, the invoice. Now it all made sense. I called Mr. Brown and left an apology on his answering machine.

Early the next morning Mr. Brown called and said, "Okay Motorola man, I 'cept your apology! And I guess now you got a two-way radio that someone returned that I ken buy real cheap, huh? Meet me at the Waffle House at 11:00 am."