

REVISED EDITION

HOW TO
**SELL
MORE**
IN
LESS TIME

WITH

NO REJECTION

Using Common Sense
Telephone Techniques

Art Sobczak

V O L U M E 1

**HOW TO SELL MORE,
IN LESS TIME,
WITH NO REJECTION,**
USING COMMON
SENSE TELEPHONE
TECHNIQUES

Volume 1

ART SOBCZAK

***How To Sell More, In Less Time, With NO Rejection, Using Common Sense
Telephone Techniques—Volume 1***

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Introduction

As I sat pondering the future of my company and what I wanted to do for the second half of my career—I’ve been in business since 1983, slight attempt at humor there—I reflected on the many many training resources I’ve created over the years. It had been 20 years since I wrote the original of this work, my first book, and about 18 since Volume 2.

I revised and reprinted them numerous times, but not so much lately. They’ve done well, selling over 50,000 copies, which is good for selfpublished business books. But, with the advent of the Internet—I think that will catch on by the way—the book business took a huge hit. Just ask Barnes and Noble, Walden books, and thousands of mom and pop operations. Plus, so much information is easily accessible for free online. I came this close (picture my thumb and forefinger almost touching) to letting these books become antiques, relegated to the “out of print” category on amazon.

And then I picked up a copy of each. And went through them. And read more carefully. *Damn, this stuff is still great information.* Actually, I still teach most of it in my workshops and client training.

So, I decided that they needed to be dusted off, touched up, reformatted, rereleased, and trumpeted to the masses once again so entire new generations of sales pros can benefit.

Although in the 20 years since this book was first released, the changes that have taken place during that time—especially technology-wise—has been mind-boggling and beyond what most people could have predicted, one thing hasn't changed: people.

People still buy from people. And that was what this book was about 20 years ago, and is again today. Sure, I've removed some of the references that were outdated and wouldn't likely make sense to today's readers, and updated some of the terminology. But, surprising even to me, it was less than one would think. I have left most of the original writing and suggestions intact. And they still work today. What you won't find is virtually anything on today's social media. Because, when I first wrote this, we used the original form of social selling: talking to people. And **that** still works today as well.

So, with that, we're going to transition into the original version, just touched up a bit.

About This Book, and How I Suggest You Use It

I've often found it peculiar that a book should come with instructions. I mean, for gosh sakes, this is an entire book of instructions. But I've included some anyway.

Although you can if you wish, this doesn't need to be read from cover to cover in sequence, like a gripping novel. That's because it's not a complete step-by-step manual on how to place the sales call (although by piecing the ideas together you could do just that). I have other online programs and seminars that are comprehensive training programs, and if that's what you want please go to <http://BusinessByPhone.com>.

This book is a useful collection of common-sense, how-to-do-it and say-it tips and strategies that can make your job easier, more fun, and increase your income—today.

I've organized the sections in a logical sequence: that of the properly executed sales call. After the *Top Ten Mistakes Made By Sales Reps When Using the Phone*, we start out with *Persuasive Telephone Communication*, then follow with *Planning Your Call*, *Getting To Decision Makers*, *Interest-Creating Openings* . . . you can read the Table of Contents for the rest. Within each section are independent chapters, each unrelated. And quite often within the chapters the ideas and tips can stand on their own.

That's why I suggest you use this book as a reference guide, a training tool . . . a treasure chest that you can visit time and again, lifting the lid and picking out a few jewels that strike your fancy at that instant.

Let this book be a companion as you slay the dragons of sales, going to it to stimulate ideas when the inevitable obstacles block your path to success.

Don't just read this book; work with it when you're in one of those super-motivated moods. I like to think that you'll find some parts entertaining, but, after all, you've got better things to do with your leisure, laid back time. Therefore when you're ready for an interactive self-improvement session, pick this up, immerse yourself in it with highlighter in hand and pen in pocket-protector, poised to react to the ideas that reach from these pages with stern hands, grab you by the lapels, and say, "Use me!" These are the ideas you'll immediately want to highlight, and better yet, make notes on . . . either in the margin, or in the "Your Action Steps" areas provided at the end of most chapters.

YOU MUST DO THIS TO TRULY SQUEEZE THE MOST FROM YOUR INVESTMENT.

Otherwise, if you're like me, you'll come across an idea, say, 'Yeah, that's the ticket,' then continue reading or get distracted by ESPN or Facebook and the idea tumbles by the wayside like other great intentions, such as cleaning the garage. But by

scribbling down the idea, and forcing your brain to apply it to your situation . . . thinking of when and how you'd use it, shaping the words into your own, to what you will vocalize the next time you encounter the scenario, even practicing it out loud . . . now that's how it transforms into changed behavior—and profits for you. (Because I don't want you to hesitate about downright defacing this book, if you wear it out beyond recognition and want another one for yourself, call me personally at 1-800-326-7721. I'll want to hear about your inevitable success stories, and I'll give you a replacement book at half-price. No kidding!)

That's a Bold Face . . . Suggestion!

I'll undoubtedly receive nasty (but grammatically correct) notes from publishing purists berating me for my wanton disregard for traditional typographical standards, namely my frequent use of bold face and italics throughout this text. The geeky critics—who always ignore the sales material and nitpick on the style—can moan all they want for all I care; my concern with this book is to provide you with an easy guide to selling more. That means by glancing through the pages you'll immediately recognize both good and bad examples of techniques.

Examples of what I suggest you say (or adapt) are shown like this,

"This is an example of what a suggested phrase, question, or opening statement would look like. Notice it's in bold face, and in quotes."

I often use examples of poor calls I've received, heard, or maybe even placed myself.

"The poor examples are written in italics, in quotes, and not indented like the good example. It's a little tougher to read because I don't want you dwelling on the bad examples too long anyway."

About the Author, Just In Case You're Interested

Since you (or someone, unless you borrowed it) invested good cash in this book, you might wonder why what I have to say means anything more than any schmoe off the street.

Here goes.

Even prior to entering the "real world," I developed a knack for phone sales, starting at age 14, all the way up to and through college excelling at a variety of phone jobs, selling newspapers, advertising, even tickets to your local law enforcement circus. Yes, I've certainly seen the dark side of telephone sales and solicitation and worked for some real dandies in my peach-fuzz years. If you told me then that my career would ultimately be in telesales—now called inside sales—would have laughed at you. I wanted to be on the radio. And all throughout college I spent every Friday and Saturday disc-jockeying dances and wedding receptions.

Upon further studying of the journalism/broadcasting field, I realized riches were to be had much more quickly in what

I was already doing, and doing well: sales. After graduating from Creighton University with a marketing degree in 1982 I've invested my entire career—you guessed it—in some aspect of telesales/telemarketing. I worked for AT&T Long Lines (before the breakup of the Bell System) selling—very successfully—exclusively by phone at what was their showcase facility, a state-of-the-art business-to-business telemarketing center when they were promoting telemarketing as a “new” business concept in the early 1980's.

In 1983, after just about a year with Ma Bell, I decided to leave, and form a consulting company, showing companies how to do this new “telemarketing” thing. (It wasn't a bad word then.)

Like many startups, money was tight to begin with. I had a client that was a start-up inbound telemarketing service agency (contract call center—that term wasn't around then) that hired me mostly for a full time position starting and running an outbound division where we placed phone calls for a variety of clients (clients which I also had to acquire). In this capacity I planned the sales campaigns, wrote and tested the scripts, trained and managed the people, even carried out the trash (you know how startup operations are!).

After about a year of that, working ungodly hours, and still running my own business in my “spare time,” I realized I'm not an operations person. So I was recruited by and took a position with a much larger, similar operation, which was a subsidiary

of American Express at the time. In this position I only did what I did best: selling the service to large companies. There I was quickly promoted into a different division, now running direct marketing programs, and really doing very little selling, other than for my company, which I worked nights and weekends with. I was miserable in corporate life, and knew I needed to be all in with my own deal. So I pushed all the chips in, again.

Since 1987 I've been full time exclusively with my company, Business By Phone Inc. It's been a great ride.

Every month since 1984 I have put together the "Smart Calling Report" (Formerly "*TELEPHONE SELLING REPORT*") newsletter, eight pages of how-to tips on selling by phone. Much of what you see in this book appeared in my newsletter. I've taken some choice articles and tips, categorized them, reedited and reshaped them, and put them into this book. Don't worry about the timeliness—everything here is as useful today as it was the day I originally wrote it. And virtually all of these ideas are like a fine wine, getting better with time.

Early on I spent about 75-100 days a year with salespeople, delivering customized seminars and workshops for organizations as large as IBM or as small as the auto parts distributor you've never heard of, or delivering my public Telesales Rep College (now Smart Calling College, SmartCallingCollege.com) two-day seminars nationwide, and now online. I've helped groups as large as a few thousand, and as small as one-on-one

consultations. Today, I have the luxury of not needing to work as hard or travel as much, but most days I'm at the gym by 5am, and in my office by 6:30 working, creating, teaching, selling, and continuing to learn myself.

I've been a prolific producer of sales training resources . . . articles, tips, newsletters, audios, videos, webinars . . . you name it. My most recent book, *"Smart Calling—Eliminate the Fear, Failure, and Rejection from Cold Calling,"* (SmartCalling.com) was my first with a major publisher, John Wiley and Sons, and hit number one in the Sales category on the very first day it was released, and stayed there for three weeks. Today, in its Second Edition, it is on amazon's list of the "Top 20 Most Highly Rated Sales Books of All Time." Yes, all time. I'm humbled, and proud.

So what at all does this have to do with you, and your future success?

You're holding the result of lessons learned from tens of thousands of sales calls; mine, my clients and readers, and the skilled professionals (as well as some of the unprepared, careless saps) who have called trying to sell me their wares. While on the phone personally, I've enjoyed a much better-than-average degree of success, but, like anyone who has earned his stripes, I've been bloodied up with the best of them . . . having had phones slammed in my ear, and I've tried all the techniques out there, ranging from laughable to superb.

People tell me that the material I present is of the real-word. That's because I'm one of you . . . a salesperson, first and foremost. This I feel is crucial if I'm to have credibility with you; I find it unethical that some people try to fraudulently pass themselves off as experts when they've never actually performed the activity they preach about. I've experienced the trenches, and still sell my own training programs. I feel I must in order to stay razor sharp and test the techniques I talk and write about. I get no greater thrill than moving a person to action, causing them to do something that perhaps they hadn't even considered 20 minutes earlier, by just using my words shaped into sound ideas that they see tremendous value from. It's intoxicating!

But, we can only learn so much from our own experiences, therefore I'm a perpetual student of the sales process . . . constantly keeping my antennae out for any and all material which I can use and share with my customers as it relates to selling and helping people buy. It's my obligation to my clients and customers. In fact, unlike some sales gurus I've seen in my day, I don't claim to have invented sales, or the sales process. Many of the ideas you see here are adapted from other sources, and I give them full credit in case you'd like the full text of the book, audio, or publication, which I suggest wholeheartedly. (Some you might have to search really hard for, since they've gone out of publication, or business in some cases. Nevertheless, I've left the credit line in.)

About the Title

You might have bought this book because the title promised something just short of free money. Other than the marketing fact-of-life that books need jazzy, results-oriented names to grab initial attention, and sell, I dubbed the book “*How to Sell More in Less Time, With No Rejection, Using Common Sense Telephone Techniques—Volume 1*,” because it will deliver precisely those results.

Here’s how.

How to Sell More . . .

It’s quite simple. If you use the material in this book, you’ll sell more, regardless of whether you’re a salesperson who never sees a customer face-to-face, or if you only use the phone to prospect and qualify. I can’t and won’t sit at this keyboard and try to justify it any more than that. I don’t need to, because the key word here is “use.” Just like a gym membership itself won’t melt the spare tire away from one’s midsection just by virtue of having your membership card on your keychain, neither will this book increase your sales from its perch on your shelf. I hate to be arrogant and say there’s no way you couldn’t increase sales with these ideas, but, I make no excuses for my boldness when I say it’s true. People who have more than doubled their incomes using just a few of these ideas have told me so. And so will you—if you want to.

In Less Time

If you are an outside salesperson and feel that the sole purpose of a phone call in sales is to get an appointment, as quickly as possible, by whatever means possible, you're sorely misguided.

And if you're doing this now, filling up your appointment book with quantity (although you won't admit it) with reckless disregard for quality, I feel confident in saying that regardless of how successful you think you are, you're missing sales.

Lots of them.

And wasting tons of time doing it.

When I say this to outside sales reps at seminars they naturally get defensive, puff out their chests, and reject my notion out of hand. Outside sales, they snort, is different than inside sales.

Just as I tell these reps, don't look at what you do as inside or outside sales. It's just *sales*. Doing it by phone or in person is simply the means you use to communicate. And I accept two statements about sales communication as undeniable:

1. Face to face communication is the most effective way to sell.
(You have the nonverbal aspect working for you.)
2. Face to face communication is the most costly and time consuming way to sell.

Logic tells you, then, that to maximize sales, you need to operate at the optimum efficiency level for every aspect of the sales process. Therefore, you should only spend time in front of people who you know buy what you sell, are in the market to buy what you sell, have the money available, and hopefully, are ready to buy right now. Otherwise, you're wasting time and money.

Why, then, would an otherwise intelligent salesperson squander time driving, sitting in airplanes, waiting in lobbies, and pitching to people, only to realize they would never buy from him? Quite often these are the same reps who say the only purpose for the phone call is the appointment. Let me illustrate.

The Saga of Dan and Eugene

Dan and Eugene are both fairly new sales reps for the same medical equipment company, calling on dental offices. Each is responsible for developing his own territory by prospecting for, and opening new accounts. Dan is a master prospector, recognizing the immense profit-making power of the telephone and other tools as part of his sales process. Eugene has contempt for the phone, regarding it as a necessary evil to try and set appointments, although he prefers drop-in cold calls.

On a typical day, Eugene visits three prospect's offices in the morning, those he ostensibly set "appointments" with the day before. For him, setting an appointment by phone means talking to the person who answers the phone at the practice, and asking if the dentist might be able to see him the next morning.

Rarely does he speak with the dentist by phone, and rarely does he get an actual appointment with a dentist. Mostly he's told that the dentist will be busy with patients, but he still visits the offices, hoping he can get a few minutes with the doctor. He spends the afternoon dropping in cold on offices, normally making it to around four per day, occasionally getting a brief "lobby interview" with an Practice Manager after lengthy waiting room stays, but often just leaving brochures after being informed the doctor won't be able to meet with him. He squeezes in prospecting emails in the afternoon, when he has time, and occasional follow up phone calls.

Each week Dan, the Master Prospector, spends all day Thursday and Friday making prospecting phone calls. He believes that the farther he can take a telephone call, the more productive his face-to-face meeting will be with a prospect. On his initial calls his goal is to speak with the buyer, the Doctor. Usually he has to work his way through the front desk person, then to the Practice Manager or Office Manager. He asks questions, generates interest, and works with these influencers to actually get phone appointments with the dentists, determining their needs, desires, and ambitions. If the doctor shows interest, and there is a fit, he introduces the product, and explains how it would help the doctor accomplish what he wants. If the Doctor still shows interest, Dan suggests they get together and meet personally. He schedules four of these meetings per day, on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. His appointments are

firm, and he knows he's always meeting with a qualified, interested prospect who is well on the way to a buying decision.

Let's look at the weekly scorecard:

Eugene—35 office visits, with an average of five resulting in a sit-down visit with a doctor. Of those cold prospects, Eugene realizes about three are worth pursuing, or agreeable to continuing a dialogue. Eugene can normally close 40% of those he continues calling. Net result: Just over one (1.2) new sale from his weekly activity. And that number goes down consistently.

Dan—50 completed prospecting phone calls total on Thursday and Friday. That's 25 per day, five per hour (calling five hours per day). These are calls where again, he is speaking to others in the practice—working WITH them instead of trying to go around or through them—with the ultimate goal of getting the doctor on the phone. When he does, he pursues the opportunity as far as he can. Some calls are short; others can take 10, 15, even 30 minutes. On just over 25% of these calls (12), Dan arranges a face-toface meeting. Like Eugene, he eventually closes 40% of these. Net result: Almost five (4.8) new sales from his weekly activity.

Who will develop his territory more *quickly*?

Who will be more fulfilled?

Who is doing a greater service to the customers in his territory? Who will become richer, *in less time*?

The math works, my friend.

Just by using the phone more, even using mediocre techniques you'd likely achieve everything I promise in the title. But combine determined phone use with the proven techniques in this book, and you'll smile at your results.

And I've not neglected you, either, my inside sales colleague. You're going to see how these ideas will help you sell more in less time also, by spending less time chasing shadows—the people who will never buy from you—therefore freeing up more time for the truly qualified buyers.

... *With No Rejection*

This one is easy to justify. Because whether or not you feel rejected depends on your definition of it.

So what is rejection, anyway?

It's not an experience. It's your personal *definition of an experience*.

For example, when I was writing the first version of this book, I received a call from a pest control company sales rep. This hapless soul, without giving me a reason to listen or asking me a single question launched into a pitch about how he had

treated my old office location several years ago, and he'd like to come back now and give me an estimate, and would I be available next Tuesday. I quickly whisked him off the phone, explaining I had just moved into a newly renovated building I had purchased, and had no pest problems.

Was he rejected?

If he thinks so, he was. If he thunderously slammed down the phone in rage, gritted his teeth, violently ripped apart the prospect card, and yelled out “jerk” (or something more anatomical), he probably was rejected.

But consider if he coolly said to himself after the call, “Oh well, that really wasn’t a good prospect for me today. But I did learn some good information about his new building that I’ll be able to use later. I’ll make a note to call back in about a year, after the bugs have had a chance to navigate their way into his new building.”

Without regard to his call tactics (which were abysmal, and will receive ample treatment throughout this book), clearly that’s a person with at least the right prospecting attitude: If prospects feel they don’t have a need, or the desire—today—they aren’t rejecting YOU, personally. There simply isn’t a fit with what you’re offering.

The way to never experience rejection is to not associate rejection with anything that anyone could possibly say to you by

phone. As long as you did what you should have on your call, and you learned something, you should feel satisfied you controlled everything within your power, and that there just wasn't a fit in the prospect's mind.

If you ever experience rejection again, it's because you allowed it to happen. No one can reject you personally.

... Using Common Sense Telephone Techniques

People always tell me it's refreshing to finally find sales techniques and strategies that they don't have to hold their nose for in order to use. Conversational, non-adversarial tactics that are transparent to the listener, yet psychologically powerful in moving a willing participant towards a buying decision. And that's what is in this book: solid, how-to information—that works. No theoretical, old-school idioms that you'd be as uncomfortable saying as the “victim” would be hearing. Just common-sense, simple, let's cut through the BS kind of stuff you and I can use in our everyday dealings on the phone (and also in person, by the way.)

As I regularly tell my audiences—please excuse the grammar—“This ain't brain surgery.” (Therefore it's a *lot* easier than golf!) Selling successfully is still just plain old common sense. As you wade through these ideas, you might say, “Yeah, I've heard that before.” That's great! Common-sense has been around for a long time, and it will never go out of style. At least it hasn't yet in my 33+ years in business.

Even if you're a grizzled gray-bearded sales professional, a veteran of sales education from the finest purveyors of instruction, my main mission isn't to dazzle you with 100% new material; it's to help you think of ideas when you need them.

What's This "Volume 1" Stuff?

In the tradition of the other great classics . . . you know, *Rocky*, *Porkies*, *The Naked Gun* . . . there is a sequel to this book, very cleverly titled, "Volume II." Same type of material, just more pages and different tips. I encourage you to read it after finishing this one.

Finally . . .

Thank you for investing in this book, and consequently investing in your future success and profits. I encourage you to let this be just the beginning of our relationship. I look forward to helping you in other ways, and probably even learning from you.

Here's to your success!

1 **The Top 10 Mistakes Made By Sales Reps When Using the Phone**

Avoiding mistakes is an instant way to become better at anything. And I felt it was an appropriate way to begin this book.

Based on observing, listening to, receiving, and placing tens of thousands of sales calls and prospecting call, I've put together my list of the Top 10 Errors Made by Sales People When Using the Phone. The list is not all-inclusive, but it touches on the most heinous, avoidable errors sales reps commit every day, miscues that sabotage their sales efforts.

Throughout this book I'll give more in-depth treatment to each of these errors, but if you just read through these 10, and follow the Action Steps, I know you'll be more effective.

Here are the mistakes, starting from Number Ten, working toward the top.

10. Sending Unnecessary Information

One of the best stalling techniques ever used by prospects (or more usually, non prospects) is, “Send me information on that.” And they use it for a good reason. It works.

Every day this phrase chases sales reps off the phone, and puts them into “sending mode,” building an email, selecting attachments, links to web demos, and maybe even physical samples or paper catalogs, and worse, a detailed proposal or quote. They are convinced (mistakenly) that “I’ve got a hot one here.” Perhaps you’ve fallen victim to this yourself. In my early days I know I did.

But this balloon of anticipation quickly deflates when the sales rep calls back, hearing, “Uh, I didn’t have a chance to read that yet.” And the cycle continues.

Don’t mistake “Send me something” for a legitimate sign of interest—yet. And don’t be fooled into thinking collateral material does your selling. Don’t even be so presumptuous as to believe they will *read* what you send.

Printed materials can be a fine complement to your sales effort. Emphasis on the word “complement.” YOU still need to generate

interest to the point where they deserve literature. Otherwise you're wasting valuable selling time.

Action Steps: When you get the “send something” request, be certain the person is a legitimate buyer, and not someone trying to get rid of you. It's better to get the “no” now, rather than later, after you've already invested lots of your precious time. If you hear the request early in the call, I suggest you respond with,

“I'll be happy to send you information. So that I can include what would apply best in your situation, let me ask you a few more questions...”

If the request comes later, after you've already made a presentation, say,

“I'll be happy to send something that summarizes what we discussed. Let me ask you, though, if you like what you see, I'm assuming we'll be able to do business together?”

9. Poor Telephone Image

It's astonishing how many people give more thought to what color socks they'll wear, than to how they *look* to the person at the other end of the phone.

Try an experiment. On your next 10 telephone calls pull out a piece of paper and make tally marks in two columns: “desirable”

and “undesirable,” describing the total image you form based on what the other person says, and how they say it. When you analyze it, it’s befuddling that so many people fuss about their personal appearance, but ignore the way they “look” on the phone. And that can be fatal to sales professionals.

Action Step: The best way to improve the way you sound is to listen to recordings of yourself. Every top performer in all other skill professions uses recordings. Athletes, actors, singers, dancers, professional speakers . . . all review their performances in order to improve. You need to do the same.

8. No Post-Call Review

I cringe when I see sales reps grind out call after call, putting their fingers in “speed dial” mode, pounding the keypad immediately after disconnecting the previous call or hitting the key to automatically send the next call to them. They waste learning opportunities. That’s why there are grizzled, veteran salespeople who have placed thousands of calls in their lifetime, but have no real *experience* to speak of. They don’t REFLECT on what they have done. Learning doesn’t take place while you’re engaged in an activity. It takes place afterward, when you dwell on it. Just like reading a book, you retain more when you pause to reflect on, and react to, what you just experienced.

Action Steps: At the end of every call you place, simply ask yourself two questions:

1. What did I like about this call?
2. What would I have done differently on this call?

No time to do this on every call you place? Think again. You can't afford NOT to.

7. Lousy Listening

Success on the phone does not mean dominating the conversation. Oh sure, you've likely heard such wisdom about listening before. It makes sense. But based on national averages, few people actually *practice* it. Listening experts say that most of us listen with only 30%-50% efficiency.

I don't know what causes salespeople to turn on the verbal waterfall once they get a moment of opportunity to speak. Fact is, the other person's desire to listen to you is in inverse proportion to the amount of speaking you do. Talk a lot, and their interest wanes. And their desire to participate in the conversation diminishes the more you talk. They get bored. Plus, the more you talk, the greater the possibility you'll mention things they can object to.

Action Steps: Everyone knows how to listen. Technique is not the problem. The key is selling yourself on WHY you need to listen. It's the same with any activity. If your desire to

do something is strong enough, you'll get it done. Therefore, when you find yourself taking a mental vacation during calls, ask yourself a question:

"Why do I need to listen to this person?"

The answer tends to snap you back to the proper perspective as you answer,

"Because what this person says will tell me exactly what I need to say in order to help them buy, therefore putting more money in my pocket."

6. Screener Misuse and Abuse

I've heard sales reps refer to the screener as the bulldog, the iron gate maiden, the rejectionist, and other equally unflattering terms. No wonder these callers have difficulty getting to buyers. They experience exactly what they expect: resistance, frustrating penetrating questions, and downright humiliation. That's because the callers use strongarm tactics to try to go through, around, above, or under the screener. Basic psychology tells you that the more someone is pushed, the harder they resist.

Action Steps: To get to your buyers, all you need to do is help screeners do their job, which is protect the buyer's time so that only callers with something of value are allowed to spend time with the boss. Therefore, you need to be sure you have a Justification Statement prepared in response to "What's this in

reference to?” It’s here that you sell the screener on putting you through. And you thought you were calling to qualify *them*? The screener is qualifying YOU! And based on your Justification Statement, they decide whether or not you warrant an audience with the buyer. So, be ready to explain results and benefits that you bring to the table. Do NOT say,

“We sell _____, and I want to talk to him/her about it.”

That normally elicits a response like, “We’re happy with who we’re buying from.”

Instead, say something like,

“I have some ideas that have helped other retailers in your industry cut down on their advertising expenses while generating more store traffic. I’d like to ask Mr./Ms. Bigg a few questions to see if this would make sense for you to take a look at.”

5. Nonexistent or Inadequate Questioning

If a doctor writes a prescription without proper diagnosis, it could be grounds for malpractice if the recommendation is faulty. When salespeople suggest treatment without diagnosis (which happens all the time) there’s not the legal mechanism in place for malpractice (although it might not be a bad idea). What does happen, though, is usually disastrous for the caller: He loses credibility in the listener’s mind, since the caller

foolishly rambles on about what he/she wants to sell, not what the listener might be interested in buying. Therefore the prospect/customer channels energy into thinking of reasons why he should get the caller off the phone, instead of participating in a meaningful conversation. Ultimately, prospects and customers bring up objections as a result of poor questioning (see also reason Number 3), and lousy listening (Number 7).

Action Step: Map out your questioning strategy before your call. Instead of having a list of features and benefits you're intent on presenting, take all of your benefits and write them, one beneath another, down the left-hand side of a piece of paper. Then draw two columns down the page to the right of the words. Label the first column "Needs Filled/Problems Solved." Then for each benefit write out what need or problem the corresponding benefit satisfies. Label the right-hand column "Questions to Ask." For each need or problem write a question that would determine whether that situation existed. Use these questions during your call. Make sure you don't present what you "think" is a benefit until you've confirmed it by asking the corresponding questions.

4. Poor Preparation

Consider if an airline pilot got on the intercom just after takeoff and said, "Ladies and gentlemen thank you for flying with us today. We're going to fly somewhere, I'm just not sure exactly where, but I hope it's the right place."

Absurd, right? Sure.

Now consider another scenario. A sales rep plops down in the chair, flips on the computer or pulls out prospect names, while at the same time dials the first number. If you'd ask him/her what's to be accomplished on the call, you'd hear a vague response about a sale, appointment, lead, and so on. But that caller wouldn't be able to tell you any more about how he/she planned on getting there than the hypothetical pilot could about reaching his destination.

Poor preparation ensures a sloppy, rambling call that's like a kite without a tail, whipping in the wind, wildly changing directions.

On the other hand, you can and should choreograph your call before you place it. Just like Jean Claude-Killy said about ski racing,

“The outcome is determined by the time the racer is in the gate,” the result of your call is also determined before you pick up the phone.

Action Step: The most important step in a successful call is the first one: setting your Primary Objective. I define this as looking at where you are, and determining where you want to be at the end of the call. More specifically, ask yourself what you want to do at the end of the call, and what should they do at the end of the call. The objective must involve ACTION. If nobody's doing anything, you're no better off after the call than

you were before. And after you've set your objective according to this definition you simply fill in the blanks with what needs to happen for you to travel from point A to point B. You'll realize what information you'll need, and the information you'll want to present based on those needs.

3. Misunderstanding Objections

Before I go into companies and deliver sales training programs I always ask managers the areas they feel their reps need the most assistance. When they say, "We need the most work on overcoming objections," I'm in for a lot of work. The reason is, more objections are *caused* by sales reps than by any other factor. People object when reps don't question effectively, when they talk too much, (sounds like a couple of our earlier Top 10 Mistakes) and basically present features the person isn't excited about. Then when objections are voiced, these same reps feel as if they need to access their "objections flip chart" and retort with a slick, prepared objection rebuttal which will instantly win over the objector.

Fat chance.

Action Step: The best way to deal with objections is to prevent them from arising in the first place. Ensure you have a fit *before* making a presentation. When objections do arise, the only way to professionally address them is to dig for the reasons behind them. Only then can you begin to understand it, and then

perhaps answer it. I said perhaps, because there isn't an answer for every real objection, despite what some sales evangelists preach. Personally, my favorite response to an objection is,

"I see. Well, let's talk about that."

This lets the person know I won't pounce on them for their beliefs, but I do intend on sincerely discussing it with them. I suggest you do the same, and then question to figure out why they said what they did. You find that this is a painless, non adversarial way to deal with objections.

2. Reluctancy to Get Commitment

This is the activity that takes the least amount of skill to execute, but yet is the hardest for many people to actually perform: Asking for the sale or asking for commitment to take action.

Even if prospects are leaning in your favor, they might not volunteer the action you want unless you make it easy by inviting them to do business with you. I've seen a lot of money left on the table, and hours wasted on unproductive follow-up calls, both a result of not asking for the business, or at least asking for some commitment from the prospect.

Action Step: Build the asking habit. There's no secret or magic here. No hocus-pocus phrase that guarantees they'll say "yes" to

your offer. No offensive closing technique with a warlike title like the “Blitzkrieg Close.”

Very simply, if you want to get different results, you have to change your routine. If you’re not asking for commitment or for the sale as often as you should, you need to analyze why, and then make the change.

If your problem is rejection sensitivity, modify the way you define rejection. Don’t look at no’s as rejection; look at no’s as learning experiences that move you closer to a yes. Begin in all areas of your life. Get out of your comfort zone and ask for more of what you want. Better tables in restaurants, discounts on merchandise, whatever . . . just do it! And on the phone, ask for the sale more often. When someone is going to “talk it over,” ask if they’re going to recommend it. If they try to put you off by saying they’ll “think about it” and call you later, ask them what the chances are they’ll buy. Sure you’ll get more “no’s.” But the positive answers you get save you time, and result in more business. Plus it will build the closing behavior.

OK, Drum roll please. The biggest mistake I see and hear sales reps make on the phone is . . .

1. Opening Statements that Build Resistance, Not Interest

Within the first 10 seconds, you create one of two emotions within the person you're speaking to: Resistance or interest.

Nothing else.

Unfortunately, most callers create resistance. And that results in what they perceive as morale-killing rejection, along with an early exit from the phone call.

They start with an uninspiring line like,

"We sell _____ and I'd like to talk to you about them. "

The listener then justifiably thinks, "So what? Why should I listen?" Here's another sure resistance-builder.

"I sent you a letter and was wondering if you got it?"

So what if they did? What are they supposed to say? "Oh yes! Glad you called. I was just sitting here thinking that I should buy from you!"

Yeah, right.

What SHOULD you say during an opening to evoke interest? Here's the simple three-step success formula.

1. Introduce yourself and organization.
2. State your “connection,” meaning what you know about them or their situation.
3. Most importantly, state an interest-stimulating, curiosity-creating benefit that appeals to their desire to gain, or avoid loss, and,
4. Get them involved in a conversation. Remember, you want to do more listening than talking. Tell them that in order to deliver the potential benefit you alluded to, you need to get information. Here are examples,

“I’m Dan Fleming with Graphics Industries. In speaking with one of your marketing interns I understand you’re working with an SEO firm and not getting the results you would have liked. We specialize in working with retailers in lowering overall advertising expenses while generating more store traffic. I’ve got a few ideas I’d like to discuss to see if this would be of any value to you and your company...”

Another,

“This is Karen Hamilton with Canton Supply. I understand that you’re now getting your maintenance supplies from the local wholesale club. There’s the possibility we might be able to help you cut down on your expenses for the exact same cleaning items you’re now buying. I’d like to find out what you’re using for...”

The real test to be sure you have a winning opener is to put yourself in the position of the person hearing it. Ask yourself if you would want to hear more if you were the buyer. Would you set aside whatever you were doing and willingly participate in the call? If not, go back to the drawing board before you fail the quiz with a real prospect.

And, be sure your opener says as much as possible, with as few words as possible. ONLY by appealing to their desire to gain, or fear of losing something, will you cause them to spend productive time with you, and eventually buy from you.

By avoiding these mistakes and following the Action Steps, you have the foundation for a professional presentation that both you and your prospect will feel good about.

The additional good news is that I've just scratched the surface of ideas, and suggested tactics with you. Read on, and I'm confident you'll find a bushel of tips you'll use right away to improve your calls.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

Persuasive Telephone Communication

2 Your Voice Is What They “See”

When you speak by phone you lose over half your communication capability—you operate without the all-important visual aspect. It’s like a carpenter having access to only half the tools in his box.

And by phone, because the other person can’t see you, he creates his own total image of you . . . what you look like, how intelligent you are, and quickly determines whether or not he’ll listen to you beyond the first 10 seconds.

As I mentioned in my Top Ten Errors, a poor telephone image could cause you to be perceived like one of the characters from *“Dumb and Dumber.”* Don’t let that happen. You can control what you look like to the other person.

Bert Decker, author of the book, ***You've Got to Be Believed to Be Heard,*** and the audio program, ***Speak to Win*** (you can still find copies if you search) has suggestions for improving the way you sound.

Learn to project your voice. Recite a test sentence in your normal voice. Then inhale deeply, exhale from your diaphragm, and mentally push your voice out beyond the last row of an imaginary audience. Propel it from your stomach, not your throat.

Vary your pitch. Recite test sentences in a lilting, sing-songy, up and down fashion. Practice pumping feeling and conviction into your words.

Vary your pace. Practice using a long pause. Speed up and slow down alternately. Record yourself as you do this.

Since your voice conveys as much as 84% of the meaning of your message over the phone, it's essential you're performing at the optimal level. Ensure your voice is enhancing—not detracting from—your message.

Do You Sound Like You BELIEVE They Should Do Something?

There's a difference between simply saying the words, and REALLY SAYING THE WORDS! This is particularly true when it comes to asking for commitment and closing the sale.

Reps who use a tentative, sheepish tone don't inspire much confidence in listeners. Therefore their successes are minimal. On the other hand, an air of matter-of-factness (which isn't pushy or arrogant), projects a contagious confidence that invites and encourages compliance.

To further illustrate, put yourself in the position of buyer. How would you feel if a salesperson submissively mumbled,

"Well, do you think you might want to do this?"

On the other hand, imagine the authoritative voice of someone who knew in her heart that this was the best choice for you:

"Let's go ahead and get you started, OK?"

Listen to your recordings. Pay careful attention to not only what you say, but the way you say it. Ask yourself, "Would I be inspired by that voice?" If not, work on changing your tone, because that makes the impact.

End Every Call on a High Note, Not Every Sentence

A habit that has been documented as early as the 1950's, and became more prevalent in the early '80's is uptalking, more clinically known as "rising intonation." Many people know it as "Valley Girlspeak," inspired by Frank Zappa's song, derisive

reference to the young white women of California's San Fernando Valley who spoke it as their own dialect.

You've heard this before (but hopefully don't do it). It's ending sentences with a rising tone, as if they're questions, when they're not.

"And we have this product, it's *very durable*? And when you use it, you'll be able to get your work done in *half the time*? People tell us it's *helped them a lot*?"

Just like "Valley Girlspeak" instantly labels a person as immature and dizzy, "*It's like, like you know, a bad habit, ya'know?*", uptalking can also have negative implications.

Again, listen to your recordings. Be conscious of any habit that could distract the listener, and work on minimizing, or eliminating it.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

3 People DO Judge You By the Words You Use

Consider how you'd feel if your boss called you in and said, "I want you fired!"

Now think of the vastly different message you'd hear if we added just one word: "I want you fired **up!**"

Yes, the words you choose are like the painter's palette of colors. You can change the tone, feeling, texture and entire meaning of a message by selecting better words. In this chapter we'll focus on ideas for creating your own "masterpiece."

Get All of Their Senses Involved

As I stated last chapter, you operate with less than 50% of your ability to communicate when you use the phone. You're without vision, taste, touch, and smell—or are you?

Not necessarily.

You can use words to sketch images in the listener's mind, and help him imagine experiences, emotions, and sensory impressions. And depending on what you sell, you might be able to actually get him bodily and sensorially involved.

Sight

If you send a link to a web page, a pdf, physical literature or a sample of your product, naturally this helps bridge the visual gap. Ensure it on the follow up call.

“Kathy, take a look at the brochure I sent...”

“Stan, if you have that price list handy, let's go through it together...”

“Notice the vivid details in the graphic example I sent.”

“Is your calculator handy? Let's run some numbers.”

“Look at page 12 of the catalog.”

“If you look at a standard desktop, it would set in just one corner, and still give you room to work.”

Steve Sherman with ASAP Software worked the territory of Manhattan, NY. Surrounding him on the walls of his cubicle is a street map of Manhattan, and a three-dimensional-type map showing New York's major buildings. It helps him relate to his prospects and customers, and their location. While observing him on a customer call, I heard him say,

"Oh, you're going to a party at the Marriott Marquis . . . I see that here on my map."

Just a little bit more rapport building that strengthened his connection with the customer.

While listening to calls by Lee Jones, with specialty produce purveyor Farmer Jones Farms, he described one of his vegetables in a way that formed an instant snapshot in my mind:

"It's bigger than a pencil, but smaller than a big cigar."

That's quite a bit more visual than something like,

"It's about a half-inch in diameter and five inches long. "

Touch

Don't simply take for granted they will pick up your sample. Have them do it while on the phone, and encourage the sensory imagery.

“Just feel the texture of the cover on the sample. Smooth, isn’t it?”

“Run your fingers across the seam. You can barely feel it.”

“Do you have that sample there? Just run your fingers over that glass-like smooth finish.”

“Pick up a pen. It’s about that light.”

“The thickness is the same as a standard file folder.”

Smell

Any distinct scents associated with your product? Be sure they get a nose full:

“Did you take the cap off and notice the pleasing lemon scent?

It’s so much better than that stuff that smells like a hospital.”

“Notice the fresh, spring-like aroma.”

A List of Word Savers

People tend to be less patient on the phone than in person. Therefore, you need to succinctly make your points in order to keep the listener’s attention. Here are some wordy phrases and shortened replacements:

- at this point in time—now
- despite the fact that—although
- due to the fact that—because
- of the opinion that—believe
- would appear that—seems
- make a decision—decide

- since the time when—since
- a great number of—many

(Source: communication briefings)

Don't Make Listeners Defensive

Take inventory of your language, and avoid phrases which can make listeners defensive:

"You claim, " "allege, " or "maintain. "

"You neglected, " "overlooked, " or "forgot. "

"We require, " "demand, " or "must have. "

"I cannot believe, " or "comprehend. "

(Originally from "Writing That Means Business")

End With a Positive

At the end of a call, don't diminish everything you've accomplished by using weak phrases such as,

"I guess I'll let you get back to your work. "

"I don't want to take any more of your valuable time. "

"It's time for you to get back to business. "

These all reduce the significance of your call, the value of which should be perceived as very important.

End with a simple,

“Thank you. I look forward to our next conversation.”

Don't Erase Positive Statements

Beware of using “eraser” words like “but” and “however.” These words serve to erase the impact of what preceded it. For example, I was shopping a couple of landscape nurseries by phone, and one said,

“Well yes, we will deliver and plant trees, but it's only for the larger jobs.”

I was considering what I believed to be a larger job, but his tone seemed negative. Use **“and”** in place of the “eraser.” For example,

“Yes we do deliver and plant your trees free of charge on any job of only \$1000 or more.”

Another way negatives hinder messages is when you say what you won't or can't do instead of what you can or will do. While monitoring calls I heard a sales rep say,

“You can't return this if you keep it longer than 30 days.”

A more positive choice is,

“We’ll stand behind the product and provide a full refund within 30 days of purchase.”

Don’t Reinforce a Complaint

If you’re dealing with an irate customer, don’t refer to their issue as a complaint. Use terms like **“situation,” “concern,” “this matter,” “problem,”** or, **“misunderstanding.”**

Confusing Language Causes Them to Quit Listening

Have you ever found yourself halfheartedly listening to someone, perhaps even on the TV or radio, and then you become distracted and quit listening? The same happens on telephone conversations when a salesperson uses confusing terminology or jargon that is meaningless to the listener.

Keep in mind that your goal when speaking—as brief of a time as it might and should be in proportion to your own listening—is to create the most impact with the fewest number of words. Mix in lingo unique to your company, or get too scientific with a non-techie type, and you can almost visualize their eyes glazing over as their mind wanders from the conversation.

A few tips to keep in mind:

- **scrap the complex terminology.** Big words aren't impressive in selling. Direct response copywriters have proven that the simpler the better. The same is true—maybe even more so—on the phone.
- **ask an outsider to listen to your calls, or recordings of calls.** Have them write down all the words they didn't understand. Analyze the list objectively. Avoid the ones sure to baffle your prospects.
- **scrutinize recordings of your calls and transcribe the parts where you describe your product/service and what it does for the listener.** Be relentless in your editing. Perform major surgery. Hone it down to a finely tuned description that bombards them with benefits from all angles.

He Who Hesitates . . . Usually Loses Credibility

If you're like most of us, you occasionally hear something that seems totally off the wall, but is presented with so much confidence and enthusiasm that you think, "Maybe it could be true."

Conversely, think back to when a salesperson quoted you a price in a wimpy, shaky, withdrawing manner. You knew right away he felt it was too much, and that you'd have your way with this person.

Be sure you project confidence and believability when you,

- state your price,
- answer tough questions,
- ask for their commitment, or their business.

Your hesitation evokes doubt in the listener's mind. Don't let it happen. Exude confidence and enthusiasm, and that breeds confidence and inspires their action!

Beware of Jargon; Use Their Language

Business language has always been peppered with jargon. When this book was originally written the jargon included "input," "partnering," and "ramping up." Today the list includes "synergies," "run it up the flagpole," "open up the Kimono" (ick!), "think outside the box," and you probably have your own that cause you to cringe. This doesn't even begin to touch on the internal company babble and acronyms organizations use to communicate (or miscommunicate).

So how should we as sales professionals sort through this game of business Scrabble? Easy. No differently than what you should do anyway. Pick up on the other person's vocabulary, and volley it back where appropriate.

Over-the-road truckers communicate with each other via CB radio. Getting their message across most clearly requires the

listener be tuned into the same channel. The same with telephone or face-to-face communication. Understanding the other person's way of thinking, making mental notes of their vocabulary favorites, and sprinkling in a few of their pet words or phrases when you speak keeps you on the same channel. You connect.

For example, I had a conversation with a prospect who several times mentioned his company's "new regime" of sales. That's not part of my everyday vocabulary, so I wrote it down. Then I dropped it in strategically where appropriate during our next conversation. He cozied up more each time I did. We connected. Do the same.

Cut the Big Words; Paint Word Images Instead

If you're trying to impress people by using five- and six-syllable words, forget it, says Ron Tartarea. Big words don't impress prospects, and rarely win them as customers. He says that successful salespeople use shorter words in shorter sentences because,

- it's easier to remember and deliver presentations,
- they can say more in less time,
- busy prospects tend to listen more closely and stay focused longer, and,
- people understand smaller words quicker and better.

Tartarea also pointed out that good sales reps are like radio sports announcers who give you verbal pictures and make you

part of the action, feeling the excitement. And keep in mind those announcers didn't develop overnight. Their winning formulas were put together by,

1. believing in themselves and their abilities,
2. gaining knowledge, and,
3. practicing and preparing.

Follow this same formula for making your word pictures clearer, and you'll paint yourself into the winner's circle of top salespeople.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

4

How to Listen Your Way to More Sales

Naturally I should be a superb listener, doing so much research, writing, and practicing, right?

Not.

One day, years ago while I was working on my newsletter in my home office, my adorable daughter, Amy, a second-grader at the time, bounded in, ponytail swishing, and before she could even get words out I sniped,

“Did you get your room clean?”

Ignoring my query (as my kids were apt to do) she bubbled, “Daddy, I can read Eric’s (my fifth grader’s) library book!”

“That’s great,” I responded in a monotone that contradicted my words, “Is your room picked up?”

Ignoring me again she skipped away, unfazed, undoubtedly in search of someone who might share in her triumph.

And that’s when it slapped me upside the head: she was volunteering information about something that obviously was significant to her, yet I ignored it because I had my own agenda. Examining the relative importance of each of our desires, my revelation was that her’s far outweighed mine. Yet, I totally ignored the opportunity to partake in her revelry, and further fuel her merriment.

After chasing her down and celebrating her literary conquest, I rushed back to the computer with an obvious parallel to what many of us do on the phone:

We ignore volunteered information because we’re locked in on our own selfish objective like cruise missiles on a target. And, just like in my situation, we forfeit valuable opportunities because we need to air our own, relatively insignificant agendas (after all, what customers and prospects say is always more important than our own petty thoughts).

Whenever your prospect or customer volunteers information, drop everything like you would a searing hot pizza pan grabbed with your bare hand. Give as much attention to their

statements as you would if they pulled you aside, and whispered in your ear that they had insider stock market information on a company that's going to double in price.

Volunteered information consists of statements made not as a result of your questions, but because of what's important to them at that instant. Here are warning signs you might be losing out on this potentially valuable data:

You find yourself trying to jump in before them. Then you both step on each others words, getting tangled in kind of a verbal gridlock. The more polite interrupters (an oxymoron?) then engage in a transaction reminiscent of that old cartoon where the two animals banter back and forth, "After you,"

"No, after you,"

"Oh I insist, go first," and so on.

They react indifferently to your statements or questions.

Just like my daughter, when you ignore their interest, they are stifled, and tend to ignore you in return.

You listen to recordings of your calls and hear things you missed the first time. It's like seeing a movie for the second time.

What to Do

There's no magic here. It's just a matter of knowing what you want to do, and then doing it. After all, it's difficult enough to get people speaking. When they finally do, let them! When someone contributes information unrelated to what you're talking about, clam up and focus on *them*, and their ideas. Encourage them with phrases such as “**go on . . .**” and “**tell me more . . .**”

Enter your calls like an adventurous explorer. Know where you want to be at the end, have an idea of what you need to do to arrive, be prepared for hazards along the way, and be flexible enough to react to what the elements throw at you, because that is what leads you. That is the key. The prospect is like a person wielding a machete clearing a path through the forest; their information clears a trail. Take advantage, and follow it.

Volunteered Information Can be Useful

While monitoring a sales rep's conversation, I recalled an old Jerry Seinfeld routine. His observation was that people have an innate compulsion to explain why they do what they do.

For example, picture someone going into a convenience store asking for change. They feel compelled to say, “I'd like change for a dollar please . . . it's for the parking meter.”

Or, a person at the checkout stand buying a single jar of grape jelly who sheepishly confesses, “It’s for a special recipe. I realized at the last minute I didn’t have any.” (While editing this book, I caught myself saying to a hotel desk clerk, “I’d like change please, for the valet.”)

Perhaps you’ve witnessed this type of behavior. Or, maybe you’ve performed it. The reason Seinfeld’s routine came to mind while monitoring calls is that the sales conversation went something like this,

Prospect: “We’ve decided we’re going to go in a different direction.”

Sales Rep: (after a pause) “Oh?”

Prospect: “Well, not an entirely different direction . . . you see we just really need to pull in the reins a little and evaluate where we are before we decide how we’re going to allocate the budget for the next year.”

Sales Rep: “I see.” (pause)

Prospect: “Of course that doesn’t mean you won’t be part of the budget. Actually, I think you would have a very good chance at being a key supplier, but it will take some time, and we’d have to discuss the details.”

The sales rep listened further as the prospect talked a full 180 from “going in a different direction” to “becoming a key supplier.” And the sales rep uttered, oh, a whopping total of about five monosyllabic words to help the person do the about-face.

As I watched and listened to the sales rep engineer this turn-about—by basically doing nothing—I smirked, recalling how some other loquacious reps would have nipped the prospect’s reversal in the bud with their own monologue about why “going in a different direction” wasn’t the best thing to do.

Listening. So simple, but yet so difficult to execute. A sales manager once told me, “My sales people like to listen—to themselves.”

An interesting phenomenon, though, is that people will tell you exactly what you need to do to help them buy . . . if you will remain quiet long enough to let them. The Queen of Cosmetics, Mary Kay Ash, said, *“Listen long enough and the person will generally come up with an adequate solution.”*

Four Listening Tips

Think about your purpose for listening. After all, *purpose* is the motivation for doing anything. If your reason is strong, you’ll do it. If not, you won’t. Convince yourself of the fact that what the speaker has to say, and how you process and react to it, determines your income. Before your calls remind yourself of who has the most important information to share on that contact. It’s not you.

PAUSE. Ask a question, then clam up. If you were face-to-face with them, there would be silence as they shifted their eyes upward to think about their answer. Don't let silence intimidate you into answering your own question.

PAUSE again, after their answer or statement. Let them speak, let them finish, and then let them continue. Given the opportunity, many people will keep on talking and further explain what they just said. It's here where you might get some of your very best information. A very successful rep told me, I always wait after I get the first answer. Then I hear the real one."

Prepare. Preparing for your call will make you a better listener. When you're totally prepared for your call, you don't need to think about what you're going to say next while the other person is speaking, therefore missing what they're saying.

Be Cautious of Prejudging Based On Sound

If you've placed sales calls for any length of time, you've likely had the experience of negatively prejudging someone's potential based on the way they sounded, and then had that notion blown out of the water. For example, I took a call from a guy who sounded like he was just awoken from a deep sleep after having gone on an all night drinking binge. Imagine my surprise upon learning he was one of the leading authorities in his industry, and the president of his company!

The point is, you can't afford to lose your edge when you get someone on the phone who doesn't sound like your image of a buyer.

Listen Carefully for Non-Verbal Buying Signals

Even though you can't see the other person, you can still pick up non-verbal buying signals by listening carefully. If, for example, you hear them punching numbers into their keyboard after you've just given some prices and quantity discounts, background, that could be a sign that they're figuring up what you can help them make or save.

Silence Can be Golden

Picture this: you're sitting in the decision maker's office, you ask a question, she shifts her eyes upward, takes a deep breath, furrows her brow while contemplating an answer, then responds. The whole series of events took, maybe, four seconds. Nothing unusual. But, think about the last time you had four seconds of silence on the phone. Some people never have! They tense up, and blurt out babble just to fill the void . . . depriving themselves of potentially valuable information. Get more comfortable with phone silence, and you'll learn more details which will help you help them buy.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

Planning Your Call

5 **Successful Calls are a Result of Precise Preparation**

*"The will to win is not nearly as important
as the will to prepare to win."*

Indiana University Basketball Coach, Bobby Knight

Olympic-class athletes make their artful performances look so easy. What we don't see, however, is the lifetime of preparation they invested to reach their level. Likewise, a great sales call seems to flow effortlessly. It too, is a product of preparation.

Preparation before your call needs to be both strategic and tactical. You need to plan for the long and short terms.

Overall Relationship Strategy Preparation

Very simply, this can be defined as

“Where, ultimately do I want to be with this prospect/customer, and where am I now?”

For example, if you’re prospecting, your relationship strategy goal would naturally be to sign up the prospect as an account. If you haven’t spoken to them, obviously you’re starting at ground zero.

If you’re placing a follow-up call to an existing customer, your goal might be to upgrade them to a more recent version of what they’ve purchased before.

Call Strategy Preparation

A snapshot of a portion of the Relationship Strategy is what you want to accomplish on this call. It might realistically take you three calls to reach where you want to ultimately be. This preparation requires you to answer the question, “Where do I want to be with the prospect/ customer at the end of this call?” More specifically, I suggest you answer these questions:

“What do I want the prospect/customer to do at the end of this call, and, what should I do?”

Notice that these require ACTION-oriented answers. Because, for positive movement to take place in a relationship, there must be action; you both need to *do something* as a result of the call.

Call Tactic Preparation

Your specific tactics flow from your strategic objective. After all, you wouldn't jump in your car, begin driving, make turns, and then say, "Where do I want to be at the end of my journey?" You'd know your destination in advance, and then map your route accordingly, just like on your calls. Therefore, with your objective in mind, ask yourself,

What do I know about this prospect?

What do I need to know in order for them to take the ACTION I desire?

What information can I get from people other than the decision maker? (From screeners, for example.)

If I reach voice mail, what will I say?

What is my opening statement, and is the benefit strong enough for them to be sufficiently aroused to listen and share information.

What specific questions will I ask?

What is my fallback position? (Just in case you don't fully reach your primary objective.)

Does this preparation take a tremendous amount of time? Not compared to the time that's *wasted* on calls where you don't

have a specific objective, and therefore wander in no particular direction, or get quickly whisked off the phone due to lack of preparation.

What You Need to Know About Your Products/Services Before You Place Calls

Ever been through dry, technical training that caused everyone to lapse into a glassy stare, one resembling the glass-eyed trout setting on in your grocer's seafood case?

A problem I see with a lot of product training is just that—it's simply *product* training. The next time you go through product training, ask—no, insist—that it include product **application** training. After all, the application of the product, the subsequent results, is why the customers want the product. Ask questions like,

- What problems does this solve for customers? How?
- What symptoms of these problems would potential customers experience?
- Under what circumstances would a customer show the greatest results from this product/service? What are those results? How could he measure those results?
- Why would a customer be better off with this product/service than they would with the competition's.
- Long term, how could a customer measure the value they would receive with this product/service?

- Why would a potential customer not want this product/service?

When you have this information, *then* you're able to formulate the best questions to uncover customer needs.

By the way, do you know the answers to these questions about the products you're now selling? If not, you have some research to do. After all, you can be a technical product expert, but that's likely worthless to your potential customer. What they care about is how the product will help them.

Know Why You're Placing Your Calls

My friend, Jim Meiseneheimer, wrote a book called "**47 Ways to Sell Smarter.**" In it, he asks you to imagine your manager asking you, prior to placing your calls,

"What's the purpose for each of these calls? What do you want to accomplish here today? What's the primary sales objective of each of these calls?"

How would you respond?

Would your responses include vague and general comments such as, to make a sale, to introduce a product, or, to find out about the customer's needs. Or, would you respond with very precise sales call objectives?

When you plan exactly what you want to achieve during the sales call, you become incredibly focused and so does the customer.” Here are five of his reasons for setting specific call objectives.

- You’ll achieve “definition of purpose.”
- The objective will direct and guide the call.
- The customer will know why you’ve called.
- Your focused efforts will save wasted time.
- You’ll be able to measure results on every call.

The better your plan, the better your results. If you invest the time every day, and before every call, to set specific call objectives, you will turbo-charge your selling effort and dramatically improve your performance.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

Getting Through to Your Buyer

6 **Work *With* Screeners to Get to Your Buyers**

You might have heard this nonsense before: “Don’t give the screener any information,” and, “The screener can’t buy from you, they can only get rid of you.” What bilge that is.

Screeners are some of the most important people you’ll ever talk to. After all, they hold the key to the decision maker’s door. As a professional sales rep you must understand that it’s the screener’s job to dispense with callers deemed to hold no value. That’s more power than most sales reps would like screeners to wield, but it’s a fact.

There’s one simple way you can ensure you’ll get through to more decision makers:

Know why the boss would be better off by speaking with you, and be able to articulate it very clearly.

I term this a “Justification Statement.” Here are a few rules for developing and using them.

1. **Talk about results, not about your products.** Normally I don’t have my incoming calls screened. But as I was rushing to get a newsletter to the printer, while also approaching a flight time, a call came in. Tricia, my assistant asked the caller what it was in reference to. The caller, a salesperson, said she wanted to talk to me about advertising. In other words, she wanted to discuss what she wanted to sell, not what I want from advertising: increased sales, profits, and customers. This is the very reason most sales reps get screened out. After all, who are screeners told to get rid of? Salespeople. Not people who have something of value to contribute to the company. You might indeed have tremendous potential value to contribute, but if it’s not communicated clearly to the screener, you’re lumped in with the pesky salespeople.
2. **Make delivery of the results contingent on speaking with the boss.** True, the screener can’t buy from you. But she/he must buy into the fact that you do need to speak with the boss. Therefore, after mentioning the results you can deliver, suggest that you need to speak with the decision maker to determine how you could produce these results. For example,

“...and to determine if this is something he’d like to take a look at, I’d like to speak with him about his plans regarding...”

3. **Ask questions of the screener.** I constantly preach on this. Always will. The more information you have, the better off you are when you speak with the boss. Say to the screener,

“You probably work closely with Ms. Daffodil. I bet there’s some information you can help me with first...”

More Tips on How to Get to Buyers

Here are additional tips on getting to decision makers.

- **Give full identification up front on your calls.** Include your company name, and your name. If you’re returning their call, mention that also. It answers screeners’ questions before they’re asked.

“This is Pat Downy with ABC Industries calling for Terry Mudhen please.”

- **Learn the screener’s name, and use it on subsequent calls when they answer the phone.** You immediately place them in a positive frame of mind.
- **Be businesslike and professional on initial prospecting calls.** Screeners roll their eyes and laugh at sales reps

who think they're schmoozing screeners, when, in fact, they're viewed as buffoons.

- **Don't be stalled by the** *"Just send any information you have," request.* This is a tool many screeners use to brush away unprepared sales reps. Respond by further justifying your reason for needing to speak with the boss.

"As a matter of fact, one of my reasons for calling is to eventually send something to Ms. Crustacean. But I wouldn't want to waste her time sending something that didn't apply to her situation. So what I'd like to do is ask a few questions regarding..."

- **Recognize that a screener could be a user, influencer, and a co-decision maker.** If after asking the screener a few questions, it sounds as if she/he is quite knowledgeable in the area, continue probing. You might be able to get the screener—who now could be an advocate—to give a personal recommendation and introduction to the boss.

And when making a follow-up call, and the screener asks "What's this in reference to?", again, resist the tendency to become flustered; she's just doing her job. Respond confidently,

"Ms. Bigg and I had agreed to speak again today. We had a conversation last week."

This instantly states you are not a stranger, and have a relationship with the boss.

Investigate Before You Question the Buyer

Imagine this: a reporter interviews Madonna on national television and says, *“So I understand you are in the entertainment business. Now, what is it exactly that you do?”*

Imagine this: a telephone rep calls up a company, gets someone he thinks is a decision maker on the phone, and says, *“Now what is it that your company does there?”*

Hard to tell which questioner is the bigger ignoramus.

If you're initiating prospecting calls, and hope to have a snowball's chance with your buyer, **KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT THEM** before you get to the buyer.

When a prospector gets a busy decision maker on the phone, and has to ask him or her the most basic questions, he may as well say,

“I don't respect you or your time enough to do even the most basic research about you. All I care about is cranking out calls, throwing it up against the wall and hoping some adheres. I want you to do something for me, but obviously I don't care about you.”

These are some of the same callers who whine, “I don’t have good luck on cold calls.” I don’t wonder why.

Every piece of qualifying information you need on calls could potentially be gathered from others in your prospect’s organization. Switchboard operators, screeners, worker bees, and others in the decision maker’s department, people who actually USE what you sell . . . all can provide valuable insight—information that gains instant respect, and creates interest in the mind of the buyer.

Then, on prospecting calls you could say,

“Ms. Davis, I understand that your division is now looking at upgrading your finishing process on ultramagnetic components. Depending on your requirements, we have a process that has worked quite well for other manufacturers, and might be something that would fit in nicely with your system . . .”

Ask for a Friendly Favor

Here’s a tip from Nancy Friedman, The Telephone Doctor, on getting to the decision maker. It’s called the “Friendly Favor” technique.

On prospecting calls, when the screener answers, after introducing yourself and your company, say,

“I have a friendly favor to ask. I have a proposal for Mr. Wilson that will make his life easier and save him some money, too. Now I know he’s very busy, and you probably help schedule his day. Is he available now?”

Pause, and wait for the answer. If he’s not available, then try,

“I know you don’t have a crystal ball, but when might be a good time to call him back?”

Don’t Grow Old on Hold

The switchboard operator answers the phone, “Hello, ABC Company, can you hold?”

“I guess so,” the reluctant sales rep mumbles. It’s astounding how much valuable time sales reps waste by waiting on hold, even though they know who they want to speak with.

In response to the operator’s question, respond,

“Holding for Pat Davis, please.”

Or, simply,

“Pat Davis, please.”

Not surprisingly, you’re put through instead of growing gray hairs on hold. Think about it: it takes them just as much time to transfer you through as it does to put you on hold!

So, if you know who you're calling for, ignore the "Can you hold?" question, and answer with your request. The time on hold you avoid is money in your pocket.

Who's Their Replacement?

Here's the scenario: You call, ask for the most current name you have in your files for the prospected/customer. The person answering the phone says in a "I can't believe you're asking for that person"-tone of voice, "He/she doesn't work here anymore." Without skipping a beat, respond,

"And who took his/her place?"

It's important at this point to get the new name. Another alternative,

"And who's handling those duties now?"

Not "Just" a Secretary

Carol Usiak, with Oxford Medical, shared a story of what she does when the decision maker isn't available on prospecting calls. She'll ask the person answering the phone,

"Oh, are you one of the technicians there?"

If the response is, “No, I’m just the secretary,” she uses that opportunity to remind the person that she’s not “just” a secretary, she’s performing a very important role. It typically lifts the secretary’s mood, and Carol then spends time with her gathering useful information for her next call.

Get All of the Phone Numbers

Here’s a tip from Vicky Borgeson of Bell Atlantic. When calling into a company for the first time and searching for the decision maker, ask not only for the direct extension number of your buyer, but also a backup extension number just in case you reach voice mail. This way you have an alternative route if you’d prefer to speak with someone else.

Empower the Screener

Connie Marck-Giella, with Confidence Plus, made an astute observation:

“For many secretaries, their main power is in stopping telephone salespeople. By asking for their help, we’re empowering them in a different way, which they feel good about. Consequently, they’re agreeable to assisting us.”

Call at Odd Hours to Collect Information

Lisa Hiller with Sigma Diagnostics understands power of collecting information about prospects and customers from a variety of sources within an organization. Her targeted audience is medical testing labs and hospitals. She finds that by calling the nightshift she's able to speak with technicians—actual *users* of her products—who open up and provide valuable information that might be more difficult to retrieve during the day. Naturally, this helps her plan her strategy with the ultimate decision maker.

Have Them Send You Information

Brian Burris with Industrial Risk Insurance called me after attending one of my seminars to let me know of his successes. He prospects larger companies to generate leads for an insurance brokerage firm. He has begun calling larger prospects and asking switchboard operators to send him information on their companies. This information is very valuable in strategizing his initial prospecting call to the decision maker. What he found interesting is that in his first 10 calls or so, after hearing the company name, only *one* operator/screener asked what he wanted the information for. She said his company sounded like it sold insurance. He responded most assuredly that it did, and that he wanted the information so that when he spoke with the decision maker, he'd have a good feel for which insurance carriers in the market would be able to provide the best plan and premiums for their type of business. The screener reacted very favorably to this results-oriented, professional answer.

Something else he had great success with is asking screeners,

“How do you handle calls like mine dealing with business insurance?”

They instantly warm up to him. He says it’s like they ask him to pull up a chair so they can explain the mles. The information he gets is phenomenal! His feeling is that It’s rare that a sales rep treats these screeners with so much respect, so when one actually does, they are more than happy to comply.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

7 **Voice Mail Is Your Selling Partner**

Let's face it. Voice messaging isn't going away. You'll either view it as your selling companion and use it to persuade and get through effectively, or, you'll curse it under your breath upon reaching the recordings, and then mumble an uninspiring message into the receiver. Then you'll complain about people who never return calls.

If voice mail systems had "truth detectors" that modified greetings from its users we'd probably hear,

"This is Dale Johnson. I'm using voice mail to screen my calls to determine which ones have value to me. If you're a self-interested salesperson who will drone about your products and services, hit '6' now and delete your own call so I won't have to. Otherwise,

tell me quickly how what you have will help me in some way, and if it's compelling enough, I might get back to you. ”

Like it or not, that's the feeling of people who use voice mail. And you can't blame them. No one has time to return inept messages from salespeople, such as,

“Uhh, this is Pat Davis, and I, ummm, sell advertising. I'd like to talk to you about our publication, and see what it, ahh, would take to advertise with us. ”

Messages like that are zapped into electronic oblivion. There's nothing of value there for the listener. Worse, it creates resistance.

But never fear, you can and should use voice mail as a sales tool—to get screened in, not out. Here's how.

Be Prepared. As part of your call preparation, know what you'll say just in case you reach a recording. Ensure you'll have a smooth delivery with no “uhhh's.” Their perception of you is based even more on the way you sound than on what you say. If you're not prepared, don't bungle through a message and sound like a goof. Hang up and call back when you are ready to tantalize with a brilliant message.

Present Benefits. You've got about a nanosecond to grip their lapels with a benefit that causes them to say, “Yeah, I'd be interested in that.” But don't talk about yourself—people don't care

diddly about your products or services. *Results are* what they want. Mention ideas you have that might be of interest to them about reducing their materials expense, information you have on reducing employee turnover that could be of some use, the fact you've worked with other businesses of their type to help them increase their average order size, and so on. Ask yourself before your call, what do I have that this person would want, or what pain can I help them avoid?

Have a Contingency Statement. Make disclosure of the wondrous benefits contingent on speaking with them. And, don't leave entire detailed sales pitches they can reject. Instead, pique their curiosity so they raise their eyebrows, curious to speak with you to learn more:

"... and to determine if this is something that might work for you, I'd like to ask you a few questions..."

Be Specific. Tell them what's to happen: that you'll call back, or if they're to call you, the best time to reach you.

Give Numbers Slowly, Clearly, and Completely. And, repeat your phone number as the very last thing they hear. It's a pain if they listen to your message in their car and don't have a pen handy. With your phone number fresh in their mind, they can dial you back immediately.

Be a Voice Mail Sleuth

At one of my seminars, while discussing ways to find decision makers using electronic switchboards and voice mail systems, Peter Tessin, with Digital Technology, came up with a sly suggestion. He noted that most voice mail systems have options that aren't necessarily intended for external callers (you), but could be of great value. For example, you might be able to access directories of direct extensions of the personnel at the company, accessible by punching in letters of their name, etc.

Peter said that typically you can access these other options by hitting the “#” or keys on your phone, and then playing around with whatever prompts you hear. *(NOTE: This is not a direct recommendation, and I take no responsibility for anyone hacking around in someone's phone system!)*

When All Else Fails, Guess

After reaching an electronic switchboard, and then hitting “O” only to be told “That's not a valid option,” Dianne Souther with HCX said she has punched in numbers at random when the annoying cybervoice asks for an extension. Occasionally it gets her transferred somewhere, anywhere, to a real live person who can then at least provide information.

Communicate After Hours

If you need to communicate information that doesn't require a response, leave the message on your prospect's/customer's voice mail during non-business hours. You save your most productive hours for seeking, and speaking with, prospects and customers.

Leaving Your Own Greeting

So what's with people who leave their own voice mail greeting, and they say something like, "You've reached the voice mail of Jan Smith. She is either away from her desk or not in now . . ." Talk about impersonal! You want to give the impression you're talking to the caller one-on-one. Say "I" and "me" and "my" and make that person feel like you do indeed want to talk to them.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

Interest-Creating Call Openings

8 **You Have 10 Seconds to Succeed or Fail**

I've been saying it for over 33 years, and I still believe it more strongly than ever: the opening statement is the most pivotal part of your call. Without an opening that piques curiosity, and puts the listener in a positive frame of mind to participate, forget it! Nothing else matters. You can't fly the plane unless it gets off the ground.

Let's cover ideas you can use for the types of calls you probably place.

Prospecting Calls

The point you must communicate in the first few seconds is,

“We have something that might be able to help you, and I simply need to learn more about you to find out.”

The key is in using the right words. Before the call, answer these questions,

“What do prospects want most as it relates to my type of product/service, what do they want to avoid, and how can I help them do their job more effectively?”

Answer these, and you’ll likely have a benefit you can plug wordforword into your opener. Something that’ll cause them to break their preoccupation with the task at hand, become curious, and want to speak with you.

One that has been tremendously successful with my clients is a variation of,

“This is _____ with _____. We specialize in working with (their type of business), helping them to _____. Depending on what you’re doing/using/buying in the area of _____, we might have something here that could potentially help you to (benefit/result).”

Here's another,

"Hi Ms. Blank, I'm with . My company specializes in (fill in the ultimate result of what people get from buying from you, i.e. helping grocers reduce the amount of spoiled produce they dispose. We've had quite a track record of success with companies similar to yours, and I'd simply like to ask you a few questions to see if it would be worth our while to talk about some possibilities."

Follow-Up Calls

Consider preparing this opener after you *end* a call, for use on the next one. Because, a follow-up is a continuation of the previous contact. Your follow-up opener should,

- remind them of your previous conversation,
- mention what you both promised to do as a result of the previous call, and,
- state the agenda for this call.

And it needs to be proactive to be effective. No nonsense like,

"... and I was just calling to see if you got the literature, and if you had any questions. "

That's weak. A better example is,

"Kathy, it's Dan Adams calling to continue our conversation from last week. I've got some good news on the replacement parts research I did for you, and also I'd like to go through your thoughts on the proposal I faxed you..."

Calls to Regular Customers

Do you like to be taken for granted? Or, do you like to be pampered? Obvious answers. But, why then, are so many customers treated with indifference. For example,

"Hi Mike, it's Keith at Able Supply. Hey, you guys got an order for us this week?"

When your call is announced to your customer, you want him/her to say, "Oh, sure I'll take it. He always has great ideas for me." Contrast that with, "Oh, him again. Probably wants to know where my order is."

Every time you call, without exception, have a Value Added Point. It's anything that allows them to feel they've gained by simply talking to you. It can be good news, useful information, notification of a sale, ideas you have . . . anything they will perceive as useful.

“Sandra, it’s Linda with Dino Services. I was studying what you’ve been buying from us over the past two years, and I’ve got an idea here for a program that might just make your job a little easier...”

Consider beginning your opening with,

“I heard some interesting information, and you came to mind as someone who could profit from it...”

or,

“When this news came out, I immediately thought about you...”

Rules to Follow for the Most Compelling Openers

Here are additional guidelines for opening calls. The purpose for your opening is twofold:

1. to put your listener in a positive state of mind, and,
2. to effectively transition you to the next part of the call, the questioning. You don’t want to make a presentation, or ask for a sale or appointment—they’re not ready yet.

Write out your openings. Yes, script them. Everything else you’ll say on the call is in response to what they say, but the opener can and should be prepared—word for word. This way you know it will work.

What's that you say? You hate scripts? Think again. You never go to a movie and whine, "Oh, those actors are working from a script."

So, what you actually despise is the way scripts are delivered, when it sounds like a script. Which leads us to our next point.

Never sound like you're working from a prepared opening. You hate it when the robot-sound-a-likes call you at home and read (poorly) from scripts. Do it with businesspeople and you're sunk.

Look at your opening as if you were the person hearing it.

If it doesn't excite you, how in the world could it get a rise out of your prospects and customers? Scrap it and start over.

When editing your opening, scrutinize every word and idea.

Ask yourself, "Is this adding to the effectiveness of the opening?" If not, cut it, or reword it. Be relentless in your editing. Better that you rip it apart than them.

Talk about ideas and results at the beginning of the call, not about products and services. People are curious about ideas and results, they resist the mention of products and services because they feel they're about to hear a sales pitch.

The opening is simply one part—albeit an integral one—of the grand plan. Be certain you know where you're headed next, and what questions you'll ask.

What is Your D.E.P.?

In his book, *How to Close Any Deal*, (Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ). A. David Silver calls the grabber in the opening the DEP Demonstrable Economic Proposition.

He suggests you apply this idea by asking the question, “If you were to write a headline about why others should buy into what you sell, what single statement would compel them to do that?”

The answer must be a precise, alluring reason . . . an answer they would give, not necessarily one you would give. That can and does cause resistance.

For example, when FedEx was a startup, their slogan was, “We Own Our Own Airplanes.” That’s painfully seller-oriented, and the marketplace yawned a giant “So what? They eventually discovered their strong DEP: Absolutely, Positively, Overnight. Now that is what people see as having impact!

Dont Assume They'll Remember Past Calls

Let's look at an example of what you should never say during the opening.

"I see in our records here you've been working with Jack Schmoe from our office. Jack's not here and I'm taking over his territory and I thought I'd give you a call. "

Huh? Jack who? With *what* company?

I've received this call quite a few times. In every case, I wasn't a customer. Just one name in a group of prospects who the previous sales rep happened to call, months ago, likely got nowhere with, but for some silly reason kept in his or her database. Months later the unsuspecting new rep sifts through the cryptic records and begins calling as if all these people had intimate relationships with the departed rep. The prospects then violently defend their belief that they don't even know who the caller is talking about. A negative scenario to be sure—not one in which you want to begin a call.

Here's a safe guideline to follow: If you're presented with the job of mopping up to salvage something from the follow-up files of a rep who has left, don't assume familiarity unless the notes explicitly state something like,

“John has committed to buying from us in three months when his new budget is approved. Call to confirm Purchase Order number on three cases of widgeems.”

Otherwise, treat the beginning of the call like a cold call. Use benefitloaded openers like those presented earlier. And let *them* bring up the fact they spoke with someone from your company before, if they remember.

Also, use the screener to get information. Ensure that the contact name you have is indeed still the right person.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

9 **How to Open “Warm” Calls to One-Time Buyers**

***So You Can Turn Them Into
Regular Accounts***

A computer supply direct marketing company gets orders from new customers via the mail. The buyer's name is then turned over to an inside sales rep whose duty is to build the buyer into a regular account, and cross sell other items.

Here's the opening statement one rep was using:

“Hello Mr. Byer, I'm with Printer Supply. I see you've bought some ink and labels from us, and I'd like to talk to you about the other supplies we have.”

Analysis and Recommendation

“So what’s the problem?”, you might be saying right now. “That’s exactly what the rep is trying to do . . . talk about the other supplies.”

Nope.

That’s where this approach falls on its face—with the misguided objective. Don’t call anyone to just talk about *products*. Your objective is to learn about their business, what their needs and desires are regarding the results they want from the types of products/services you sell, and then make a recommendation as to how you can help them. And that’s the most effective way to build a relationship with a buyer.

As for this opening, let’s pick it apart.

First, one of my cardinal rules of opening statements is that all you want to do is place them in a positive state of mind so they’ll open up, share information with you willingly, and subsequently listen to you. This opener confuses, and creates resistance.

After the introduction the rep says, “Hello Mr. Byer, I’m with Printer Supply. I see you’ve bought some ink and labels from us.”

That’s almost accusatory. (Or at least it could be construed that way by some, the possibility of which is too high for my tastes).

A positive approach would be much better.

“First, I’d like to thank you for your recent order with us, I see we had the opportunity to provide you with ink and labels.”

Then the rep said he wanted to “talk about the other supplies we have.” This, more often than not, creates the feeling that salespeople want to avoid: resistance. A salesperson calling and wanting to talk about products implies the listener will be asked to buy something. Naturally that’s what we want them to do, but slapping them in the face with it this early in the call triggers instinctive buyer’s resistance—like the inane “May I help you?” that most retail sales clerks use—therefore placing them into a negative frame of mind before you’ve even left the starting gate. Instead, we want to instill warm feelings about sharing information with us.

That’s all you’re trying to do in the opening.

In this company’s example, the customer likely bought by mail initially because the company had lower prices on many items. Therefore the rep should use that buying motivator as part of this opening.

“The reason for my call is that depending on what else you’re using in your office, and how much you’re spending, it’s likely we have some other items here that might be attractive to you and give a similar savings (pause, wait for their response, lead

into qualifying questions) *I might be able to make some recommendations for you . . . what types of printers do you use . . . ?*

Non-threatening, results-oriented, and effective. It gives a nice transition to the questioning. If your strategy is similar, adapt this to your situation, and let me know how it works for you.

One Worth Listening To

In contrast, let's look at one I received a number of years ago when I was first writing the original version of this book. You'll be able to tell that by the technology we're discussing. "Mr. Sobczak"

"Yes."

"Hello, I'm Mike Faith with FSB. How are you today?"

"Great," I responded enthusiastically, as I always do, but wondering if this was a prospect inquiring about my services, a skilled sales professional, or fodder for my newsletter. The middle choice proved accurate.

"The reason I'm calling is that I've got an idea I'd like to run by you that could increase the response on your advertising, and help you to reduce the cost of handling those responses. (He paused to let it sink in.) We do that through a service called Fax on Demand. Are you familiar with the process?"

“I already have a system.”

Even though I wasn't a prospect for him since I recently installed a Fax on Demand system, it was refreshing to hear a nicely-composed opening statement. In it he seized my attention by immediately pointing out the results he can help deliver:

- increased ad response, and,
- lower cost of fulfilling the responses.

Having such a “statement of results” in your opening is crucial to moving your listener from a skeptical or negative frame of mind, to a positive state—or at least a neutral one—where they'll listen and answer questions.

Anything he should have done differently?

He told me he heard of me by calling my Telesales Tips Line. I asked if he keyed in the option at the end of the tip to hear about the other resources I have to help reps sell by phone. He did not. It is there that I promote the Fax Information number. Even if I didn't have Fax on Demand, it's a great idea for anyone to find out as much information as possible about the company they desire to help. In this case, he could have requested literature from me to get a feel for what I send, the cost of postage, response times, etc. . . all useful details which would help plan a more-informed strategy.

I also wondered about the choice to use the “Are you familiar with . . .?” question at the end of the opening. Typically I discourage this for two reasons,

1. If they aren’t familiar with the product/service, it almost forces you to begin explaining it early, which is premature. You don’t want to get into a product presentation until after you’ve asked questions.
2. If they are familiar with the product\service and not using it, it could potentially bring to their mind’s forefront all the reasons why they’ve chosen NOT to, again, well before you’ve had a chance to develop needs with questions.

I could concede the use of the question in this case, if after immediately hearing the prospect’s response and gauging their knowledge of the technology, continuing with the questioning (after a brief explanation, if they don’t know what Fax on Demand is):

“Let’s determine if this is something that would be worth taking a look at in your situation. Tell me how you’re now handling your advertising responses . .

Something else Mike did very well was ask for referrals. I did give him a name of someone who was a Fax on Demand expert, and wrote extensively on it.

Even though I wasn't a prospect, he got my attention, and placed me in a good frame of mind, which is the best place for all of your prospects to be.

That was not the last I heard from Mike. He resurfaced a few years later and contacted me. He saw a niche in the telephone headset business. He took a huge leap, bought the domain Headsets.com, and today it is one of the largest and most successful headset companies in the business. For years I have exclusively used their OfficeRunner headsets for my own calls.

Write It First, Then Revise It

Anyone who writes anything will vouch for the fact that their first draft is usually garbage. (For some of us it's more than that!) Many writers trash their first draft, start over, and *then* begin the editing and fine-tuning process.

So what's this got to do with selling by phone? It underscores the importance of first writing out the most important piece of your call: the opening.

When a sales rep wings an opening statement with a disjointed stream-of-consciousness collection of thoughts, it's like a writer submitting a first draft for publication. Both are destined for the scrap heap.

Your opener is the only part of your call you can script out word-for-word, since it's not dependent on what they say, like the rest of the call is. Therefore, take the time to craft your masterpiece. You need to tell them,

- Who you are,
- Why you're calling, including a collar-grabbing mention of the potential results you have to offer, and,
- Some way of getting them involved; a question, or statement that begs for a response.

Follow the advice of professional writer Marjorie Allingham who says, "I write the first draft to get the meaning down; the second, to get in the things I forgot; the third, to throw out the things I don't need; and the fourth, to make it sound like I just thought of it."

Grab Their Attention

Searching for that grabber for your opening statement? Put yourself in the position of the person you're calling, and ask yourself,

"What is it I want most as it relates to (your types of products/services)?"

The answer—less downtime, ease of use, quick turnaround time, etc.—will likely be the reasons people buy from you. Mention it in your opening and you're sure to get their attention.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

10 **Why Prospects Get Hostile**

***How to Create Interest Every
Time Instead***

You're in the state of mind business. Your task when your buyer answers the phone is to move him into a positive, receptive frame of mind. However, the openings of many telephone calls scream out, SALESPERSON!, and quickly slide the listener to the negative end of the scale. Nobody wants to subject themselves to a pitch from the stereotypical salesperson, which is the perception listeners often get based on opening statements.

As I always tell seminar participants, your prospects and customers are like the witnesses lawyers question on the stand: friendly witnesses, and, yes, you know it, hostile witnesses. And we've all likely had our share of the latter.

The fact is, though, most of the hostile ones didn't arrive at work prepared to stuff otherwise nice humans through the sausage grinder. What the salesperson says—in the first 20 seconds—mutates their states of mind to the callous end of the scale.

Sure Fire Ways to Turn Prospects Hostile

Here are sure ways to close the mind of prospects with your opening statements, making your job tougher.

1. **Ask**, “Do you have a few moments to talk?” Let me clarify.
As in,

“I'm Joe Schmoe with ABC Co., do you have a few moments to talk?” C'mon, what are they expected to say?

“Oh, sure I was just finishing my paper clip chain, so I have a few moments before I start twiddling my thumbs. ”

If you want to touch on the time issue, do it only after you've mentioned a benefit/result you can provide them, saying,

“ . . . and if I caught you at a good time I'd like to find out more about . . . ”

2. **Mispronounce Names.** It instantly confirms your status as a stranger. And like it or not, some people are so touchy about their name that if you botch it up, they'll label you

as an insensitive, incompetent goof. Talk about starting out with a handicap! If the name is questionable, say to the person answering the phone,

"I'll need to speak with, please help me with the name here, Pat Smaaaaaa..."

They'll usually complete the pronunciation for you.

3. Talk About Your Products/Services. As in,

"...and I'm calling because I want to tell you about our new"

And know what instantly goes through the listener's mind? "I already have/don't need/don't want."

It goes downhill from there, picking up speed. That's because people don't care diddly about products/services. They only care about *results*. To figure out your results, write out answers to a very key question:

"What ultimately will people gain, or what pain will they avoid by doing business with us?"

4. Be Too Friendly or Act Too Familiar. This instantly creates suspicion and/or resentment.

5. Go For a Close or Ask for a Decision in the Opening.

By hitting them with being asked for a decision before they see a good reason to, their natural resistance kicks in. For example,

“... and I’m calling to see if we can set up a time to get together, ”

or,

“I’m calling to see what it would take for us to do business together.”

A natural reaction by most people when pressed for a decision—when the request has appeared like a bolt of lightning out of the darkness—is tentativeness and resistance . . . *until* they’ve weighed all the variables. People need to feel comfortable before making a decision. (Why do you think Yelp and TripAdvisor are so popular?)

To compound this, now place that decision request at the beginning of what is negatively perceived as a sales call, and you find people pulling their head into a shell like a turtle. (Or, worse, becoming a *snapping* turtle.)

6. Ask a Salesy Question. Such as,

“Mr. Numskull, if I could show you a way you could knock your income taxes down to zero, while at the same time doubling your income, would you be interested in doing that?”

Hmmmm, no, that would mean I wasn't paying my fair share. Give me a break! These questions insult the listener's intelligence, and cause them to put their hand on their wallet, guarding it from these selfinterested peddlers.

Using the phone in the sales process is difficult enough. Why dig yourself into a cavernous hole even before the other person has had a chance to speak? You don't need to.

The Alternative that You Want: Creating Interest Every Time

Now that we've covered what immediately turns otherwise nice upstanding citizens into fire-breathing, crazed demons, let's discuss the much more pleasant alternative: interest creating, curiosity piquing utterances of brilliance that mesmerize them into clinging to your every word. (Well, that's your goal, isn't it?)

The opening is without a doubt the most critical part of your call. It's like the first section of a bridge. If it is not structurally sound and therefore crumbles, the remainder is useless.

Your opening must accomplish several objectives. It needs to,

- identify you,
- let them know what's in it for them, and,
- get them involved.

As mentioned earlier, your goal is not to sell, or ask for a decision or appointment in the opener. That's a sure way to make them as elusive as a butterfly in a windstorm. Instead, by accomplishing these three steps above you'll,

- put them in a positive frame of mind, and,
- move them to the questioning.

The Three Essential Components

Let's take a look at the three key components.

1. **Identify yourself and company.** No need for me to spend time here. Just do it.
2. **Let them know what's in it for them.** THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART! Take a few minutes and grab a large piece of paper. Answer these questions:

What do your prospects want most in life as it relates to your types of products/services?

What do they want to avoid most in life?

How are they evaluated in their jobs?

There you have it! The very reasons why they buy from you, and why they'll listen to you. Your answers are Statements of Results (SOR). Forget all that mumble-jumble about feature-

advantage-benefit-proof etc., etc.,. . . people buy **results**. And you need to put an SOR in your opening.

For example,

“Hello Ms. Sturgeon, I’m Sandy Carp with Aqua Industries. I’m calling today because we specialize in working with building contractors, and have a system that helps them minimize or eliminate cost overruns, while ensuring they get projects done on time...”

Notice, that opener didn’t talk about the fact they sell a software program to do that—the listener doesn’t give a hoot about the product. He doesn’t care about the means at this point; the end, the result, is what really matters.

Another favorite of mine that’s easy and effective is,

“I’ve got a few ideas I’d like to run by you regarding how we might be able to _____.”

Then you simply fill in the blank with the answer to one of the questions you asked yourself earlier.

3. **Get them involved.** I’ll repeat it again: you don’t want to sell in the opening; just move them to the questioning, and have them be in a receptive, curious frame of mind when they arrive. I like to say,

“...and to determine if this is would be of any value to you, I’d like to ask a few questions about how you’re now handling your project management.”

Or, you can use phrases like,

“...and to determine if what we have would be worth taking a look at, I’d like to find out more about...”

Another is,

“...and to see if this is something you’d like to discuss further, I’d like to ask a couple of questions about how you’re handling...”

You’ll know you’ve succeeded when they say, “Sure, go ahead and ask,” or, “Fine, what do you want to know?”

Before you even consider delivering an opener, listen to it as if you were the person hearing it. Ask yourself if you would be truly inspired by it. If not, can it. If you don’t, your listener will. The magic that moves them to the positive frame of mind is in appealing to what they want. And *that’s* how you create interest every time.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

11

A Nice Accent and Folksy Approach Can't Salvage Bad Technique

The unfamiliar, but delightfully provocative voice purred, “How ‘ya doin’?” with a charming Southern accent.

“Well I’m doin’ just swell, how ‘bout you?” I responded, lapsing into a slight drawl myself.

“I’m doin’ just dandy,” she cooed. “I’m with Industry Machine Publications. I just saw your advertising card in some other card deck. I’d like to know what it would take to get you to advertise with us?”

This goes to show that even the worst sales approaches can buy a little time if the delivery is appealing. But my fondness for the accent was quickly squelched by the ineptitude of the words.

“That should be your job to find out, shouldn’t it?”

“Well, I don’t know what you do, or what you sell, and I’m not even familiar with this deck you’re in, so I guess I gotta find out about you.”

What kind of lame statement was that? My patience was wearing as thin as single-ply tissue paper. Reminded me of Ross Perot’s running mate, Admiral Stockdale, during the 1992 Vice-Presidential debates, staring blankly, blithering “Who am I? Why am I here?”

Maybe the folksy approach works in building initial rapport, and perhaps it seduces some people into a conversation, but I needed a substantive reason to spend time with this belle.

She didn’t have one.

I offered up a feeble excuse, she bought it, call concluded.

Call Analysis and Recommendation

First she used the, “What would it take to get you to advertise with us?” technique. Oh, how I despise that question. It’s as if I had prepared for her call, and came up with a list entitled, “What it Will Take to Do Business With Shallow Callers Today.”

Granted, *we all* want to find out what we have to do to win business, but it's the end—the objective—not the means or the tactic. It's not a high percentage question. Don't use it.

Then she admitted her ignorance. As far as I can surmise, she expected *that* to be a good reason to speak with her. Call me crazy, but I don't perceive not doing one's homework as a big credibility-builder.

If I were in her business my strategy would be to first send away for whatever is advertised in the prospects' cards before I called. Most of these advertisements are for free information, and even the ones that charge are inexpensive. Mine offered a booklet of tips for a few bucks to cover postage. (Even if she wasn't going to call me she should have ordered the booklet.)

Then she would have known exactly what I do, who I'm targeting, what I'm trying to accomplish with the promotion, how we follow up, and so on.

Upon calling my office she should have furthered the discovery process by asking questions of the person answering the phone at my office, confirming what she knew, and gathering more info about me and the organization . . . how we promote, and what kind of results we get.

Finally, following this process she could have said, after introducing herself,

"I first want to compliment you on the booklet. I picked up some good tips. The reason I'm calling is that I've got a few ideas I'd like to run by you that could potentially help you get that booklet in the hands of people in a market you might not be reaching, therefore helping you sell your other products and services. I'd like to ask a few question about your marketing strategy to see if this would be worth taking a look at."

If I heard something similar delivered in that symphony of Southern voice and tone, I would have been like soft butter melting on warm bread. It would have easily moved us to the questions, which is the primary goal of your opening.

I always stress the importance of delivery (combination of voice tone, pacing, etc.) when selling by phone, and also building rapport as soon as possible. But relying *solely* on these areas is like trying to sit on a twolegged chair. You fall down.

This really isn't that tough of a profession; Have a great customer-oriented message, and deliver it with flair.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

12 **Don't Use the "Cocktail Party" Introduction**

Sales calls aren't cocktail parties. I'm talking about the person who starts a call with, "I've just taken over your account/I'm new here and I wanted to introduce myself to you."

This type of call is very common with reps new to an organization, others who've just been handed inactive accounts, or those from a departed (and/or fired) sales rep.

After introducing themselves, these callers normally continue with something about how they'll be calling on a regular basis, and if they ever need anything to just call, blah, blah, blah.

They seem nice enough when they phone, but let's get real here: what are the customers thinking after they hear this introduction?

About the best that can be expected: “Oh, OK, thanks for calling.”

But, typically, regardless of what they say, these confused customers are likely thinking,

“Account? I don’t *ever* recall buying from you.”

Or, “I bought from you guys once, over a year ago. I don’t care who my rep is.”

“You’re with who?”

Oh, I’m sure there might be some managers reading this right now who have instructed their reps to use the Cocktail Party Introduction, feeling denial right now, trying to defend the approach, saying it’s service-oriented, and all that other touchy-feely stuff. But anyone who’s actually placed these calls for a few days has likely been bloodied up enough to have realized the cold hard truth: it wastes the listener’s time. This might come as a shock to some, but unless the customer’s very business existence relies on your regular phone call, calling them with this selfserving declaration is viewed as a call that simply announces a policy you’ve implemented, or news at your company. It’s all “*us*” oriented. You might as well call them and say,

“I’m just calling to let you know that here at our company we’ve added three new people in the Accounting department, and we just retarred the cracks in the parking lot.”

Bottom line, it evokes a yawn, and a great big, “So what?”

It doesn’t move you closer to your objective which is to make a sale either on this call—or a subsequent one—and build a relationship.

Recommendation

OK, so you’re faced with calling “accounts” for the first time. (I use the term “accounts” loosely, since that can imply different degrees of familiarity with you, ranging from none, to a great relationship.) What should you do?

First, regarding this Cocktail Party,

- You might consider these prospects as customers, but *they* might not. Especially if they haven’t been given attention, or bought from you in a awhile.
- Your goal is to make them feel that they’ve gained as a direct result of talking to you—and there should be no doubt about that in their minds.
- They don’t care about your job, the fact you’re new, or that you’ve replaced someone. Further, if there have been several reps in and out the revolving door before you, each calling this account with the same news, it would likely evoke an “Oh, another new person, ” response. All they’re really concerned about is if you can do anything for them.

Before you place another call, prepare your strategy by asking yourself a two-part question:

1. What will they stand to gain as a result of me being in this job, and on a micro level,
2. How will they gain as a result of this call?

Answer it from their perspective. You'll then have the basis for calling them. Hone your answer, then use it in your opening.

Examples

"Ms. Davis, I'm Dan Douglas with Whittle Cutting Tools. We sold your company several cases of diamond blades a few months ago . . . and if I caught you at a good time, I'd like to let you know about a special we have on those blades, and few others you might have some interest in..."

Notice this one doesn't even mention—yet—that the caller is now handling the account. Because, it's not important to the listener. There wasn't a relationship established previously. They wouldn't have known the previous rep from their last pizza delivery man.

Next let's look at it from the perspective of a lukewarm relationship, where they are a customer buying fairly regularly.

"Tom, I'm Gwen Charles with Twin Financial. There's two reasons I'm calling today. First, I wanted to let you know I've taken

the place of Ken Hartley who worked with you in the past, and second, in looking at your account here I've got a couple ideas I'd like to run by you that...

After this opening, the rep should say,

“... and first, to make sure I'm making the best recommendations, I'd like to update my files here on what you use...”

And, finally, in those cases where the account is truly a major one, and there's an intimate relationship, have the departing rep introduce the new rep on the phone as part of his/her training. (Of course this is contingent on an amicable departure of the rep.)

Or, at the very least, send letters in advance of the new rep calling, informing the customer of the change. And still, the call must have something of value other than the introduction.

Save the Cocktail Party Introductions for after-hours functions. When you're on the phone, first and foremost, you're remembered most for what you can **do** for them.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

Selling With Questions

13 **Scrap the Benefit Lists; Prepare Question Lists Instead**

If you've gone through any corporate sales training, or training developed and delivered by your company you've probably been exposed to benefit lists. These are lists of all the wondrous attributes of your products or services you're supposed to present on your calls.

Every time I see one of these goofy things I think of one of my favorite sayings,

"A benefit is only a benefit if the person hearing it perceives it to be a benefit . . . at that very instant."

Otherwise, a “benefit” is nothing more than something you *think* they should be interested in. And what you think is worthless, without their concurrence. Therefore, if you’re presenting these “benefits” without knowing for certain they *tmly* are of interest to the listener, you run the risk of creating resistance.

Instead, grab your benefit list, and use it to compile a “Question List,” which determines if the benefit indeed is meaningful. For example, the so-called benefit of “saving time on all your stapling and folding” is meaningful only if the customer feels he’s spending too much time on the task, therefore perceiving it as a problem. You’d create a question to determine if that problem existed, brainstorm for the possible answers, think of your replies, and *then* present the “benefit” if appropriate. The first question could be,

“How much time is your staff now spending on folding and stapling?”

If they say, “None, ” you would be prepared to follow another line of questioning without skipping a beat, as opposed to sitting there with your mouth agape, figuring out what you’ll say next.

Conversely, if they admit they’re paying a person to do nothing but fold and staple all day long, you would be prepared to follow with needembellishment questions such as,

“What does the labor cost for that?”

“Are there other tasks they could perform if they didn’t have to spend so much time folding and stapling?”

Help Them Feel the Problem

Driving in to the office this morning I heard a radio commercial that used the questioning technique I favor to help prospects visualize and feel a need or problem—even if they didn’t realize they had one. The commercial asked,

“Remember the last time a big ol’ truck went by you on the highway and splashed gunk all over your windshield? And how about the frustration you feel when that happens and you’re out of windshield washer fluid?”

“Oh, I hate that”, I yelled back, realizing I was talking to a car radio. But the questions did a very effective job of helping me think of the pain I dreaded. And I was certainly receptive to hearing about the wiper fluid sale.

After brainstorming for the needs you can fill and the problems you solve, consider starting questions with phrases such as,

“How often do you notice that you are . . . ?”

“When was the last time you needed to . . . ?”

“What do you do when . . . ?”

“Remember the last time you had a situation where?”

“What if . . . ?”

“How would you handle . . . ?”

“What happens when . . . ?”

“What problems does it cause you when . . . ?”

“How often . . . ?”

Frame your questions so they get the listener thinking about a possible need they have (one you can fill!). For example,

“What happens when you need a part right away and your supplier on the East Coast has left for the day?”

The key here is being prepared for what you’ll say next. Sounding smooth doesn’t come naturally. Sounding foolish does; it’s a direct result of unpreparedness. For example, the finalists in the 1994 Miss America pageant were asked whether or not Tonya Harding should be allowed to compete in the Olympics. One contestant bumbled through her answer, while another deftly replied, “We really have two questions here: a legal one, and a moral issue . . .” Guess which woman won. And I highly doubt that she formed that response off the top of her head as she was delivering it.

Use benefit lists to create questions, the answers to which will tell you if the “benefit” truly is one. And be certain you’re prepared like a chessmaster for the way you’ll go regardless of what is thrown at you.

Absolutely Question, And Question Absolutes

You've probably heard the sayings such as, "Never is a long time," and, "There's no such thing as can't."

Essentially, what these refer to is the use of absolutes. And very few things are absolute

So, when you hear an absolute, question it, as there might be more to the story.

For example,

"We always get our supplies from the same source."

"Always?"

"There's no way we could consider another bid."

"There's no way?"

"It would be virtually impossible to get that in the budget."

"Impossible?"

And it doesn't take a nuclear engineer to figure out how to ask these questions. It's simply repeating back the absolute. It's interesting

how people have a tendency to explain themselves when even questioned slightly about something that might be suspect.

What Route Will the Buying Process Take?

Determining if your prospect is indeed a key decision maker is only one step in what I call the “Authority” category. In addition, you need to know how your contact fits within the big scheme: the decision making and buying process.

This process specifically consists of the channels which the discussions, paperwork, and side decisions will take in order for them to ultimately write your company a check.

Questions To Ask

“What’s the procedure at your company for making a decision like this?”

“Assuming you wanted to do this, what would you have to do there?”

“If you decide to move forward, what channels will you need to go through?”

“How long does it typically take for this to move through the typical company chain-of-command for an approval on something like this?”

“Once you decide you want it, will you have to run it by any other department to get financial approval for it?”

Every buying decision follows a “decision tree” flow chart-type process. In the simplest cases, it’s only one step; your contact wants what you have, and gives you a credit card number or purchase order. For other products and companies it’s like traveling a suburban housing subdivision, full of pretzel-like crooked streets, cul-de-sacs, and dead ends. The more you know about the route, the better equipped you are to influence it, and shorten the duration of the journey.

Who?

Here’s a subtle, transparent way to learn of the key players at your prospect’s company. Whenever they mention a name of someone you’re not familiar with, jot it down, and then question them about that person in a subtle way. For example, if they said, “And I’ll talk this over with Jan, and we’ll have to get back with you,” you could respond with,

“Ok. Does Jan also work in this area.” Or,

“Does Jan work for you?” (Normally, your contact will work for Jan, but this is a more complimentary way to get the same information.)

What you’re ultimately trying to figure out is what role Jan plays in this decision. Listening is the key, and reacting accordingly.

How to Differentiate Yourself From the Competition

Mark O’Laughlin with ASAP Software Express shared an outstanding questioning tip during a training session. This is applicable to any business selling a “commodity” type item, where competitors sell similar—or the same—products or services:

“If the price is the same, what will cause you to choose one vendor over another?”

The answer lets you know what will set you apart from the competition.

When They Complain About Their Vendor

When you hear a prospect give even the slightest hint of dissatisfaction with his vendor, resist the tendency to leap in with your cavalcade of benefits. Instead, get him to fully expand on the problem. For example,

“That’s interesting, tell me more about how they’ve been lax in supporting the installation.”

This helps you in two ways:

1. By talking more about their problem, he’s reinforcing his dissatisfaction, and,
2. You’re learning key information you can use with other customers who use the same vendor.

You could say to another prospect using the same vendor,

“What have you noticed regarding the level of support you’re getting on your installation?”

Ask Them Easier Questions

A go-nowhere question I hear often is, *“What do you look for in a vendor?”*

Theoretically, this should provoke a geyser of information from the prospect, with them telling you exactly what it will take to get them to buy from you.

Fat chance.

Usually it elicits a response of, “Uh, I dunno. Price and service.” A lot of good that does you.

This question forces them to think too much. It’s designed to get them to extemporaneously produce their buying criteria. More often than not, though, it results in mental grid lock. Instead, ask something easier . . . a history question for example.

“What was the criteria you used when you chose your present supplier?”

“What were the determining factors in selecting the company you’re now using?”

Don't Sound Like A Survey

While questioning, be sure that you're responding in a conversational manner—not like you're filling out an opinion survey at the mall. I've noticed reps who ask a question, repeat the person's answer, and then write down the response in excruciatingly painful detail—in silence—while the listener's patience burns to the end of the wick. The problem is clear: a lack of preparation by the rep of what to do with the answers to questions. Take the time—hours if you need to (even on your own)—to walk through all the questions you ask, and the possible responses you could receive. Be like a chess master, and plan several moves in advance.

One of my favorite quotes applies nicely here:

“The best time to think of what you're going to say is not the instant before you say it.”

Help Them Feel the Results in Advance

People buy because they picture themselves already enjoying the results of your product or service. Your questions help them do this. Here are some ideas.

“How much do you think you'd save if your waste percentage dropped by 15% yearly?”

“How would this machine help you if you had it?”

“What types of documents would you create with the new software?”

“What comments do you think you’d hear from your customer?”

“Donna, let’s project into the future here, if you had this where would you put it?”

“What are some of the ways you thought you’d use it?”

“Can you think of any past expenses this would have helped you avoid?”

Use the “Alternate-Choice Answer” to Get Sensitive Information

When you need sensitive information from your prospects to qualify them early in a call, it is sometimes awkward to ask directly for the facts.

Since you might not have established buddy-buddy rapport yet, a useful tactic is the “alternate-choice answer.” Similar to the alternatechoice close, you don’t ask directly for the information. Instead, you ask a question by offering two choices.

For example,

“Mr. Bejeeber, would you say your monthly production is about 2,000 units, or would 6,000 be closer?”

“Are you getting your supplies now from TNT Inc., or are you buying from Dienomite Co.?”

“Have you budgeted more or less than \$10 million for this project?”

The alternate-choice answer is a nonthreatening way to sniff out the valuable information you need to determine if you have a live one on the line. They will normally pick one of your alternatives. Better yet, they might blurt out the precise answer. If it's one of your two choices you can probe further until the answer is as specific as you require. Try the alternate-choice answer when you need to learn some guarded information from your prospect.

Find Out Exactly What They Want

Make it easy for prospects to think beyond any objections that might be tucked in the back of their mind, gnawing away at the possibility of doing business with you. Get them thinking emotionally and creatively. For example,

“Given the ideal situation, what would you want?”

“If you could get exactly what you want, what would that be?”

“If you were able to design the perfect program, what would it have?”

Do You Suffer from Premature Presentation?

Some salespeople are afflicted with Premature Presentation: spouting a presentation much too early.

The symptoms are objections, since the prospects don't yet see the value in what the sales rep has.

It is curable, though. The prescription is to ask more questions. For example,

Prospect: “I don’t know if it would be right for us. What do you have?”

The Premature Presenter would begin “pitching” at this point. The astute professional would say,

“Well, let me find out more about your situation so that I can tailor my remarks to what would work best for you.”

Don’t Always Answer a Question With a Question

A piece of nonsense taught in some sales training circles is “Always answer a question with a question,” as in,

Prospect: “Does the carpet come in blue?”

Salesperson: “Do you want it in blue?”

And then the prospect is likely thinking, “What kind of moron am I dealing with here?”

A better, non-salesy approach is to answer their question, and *then* follow immediately with a question regarding their needs. For example,

“Yes, it does come in blue. Is that the color scheme you’ve decided on for the interior of lobby?”

Another,

Prospect: “Do you have next day delivery?”

“Yes we do. How often do you anticipate needing rush shipments?”

Use Results-Oriented Questions

Keep in mind that buyers don’t care about your products/services—they only are concerned about the results they get by using them. And that should be the focus of your questioning.

For example,

“What kind of turnaround time do you really want, and what do you get now?”

“How do you measure a good, quality job?”

“How do you know when you’ve achieved it?”

“What, ideally, would the software do for you?”

“How would you define a good value for your money?”

“What functions do you need the machine to perform?”

“What would you want the people doing differently after the training?”

“How do you measure good service?”

“What, ultimately, do you want?”

Be Prepared With Questions

The key to understanding your customers has more to do with the questions you ask than the answers you have, says Jim Meisenheimer in his book, *“47 WAYS TO SELL SMARTER.”*

Jim lists some of his favorite, prepared, questions:

“Tell me about your business.”

“What are your priorities?”

“What’s your criteria for evaluating new products?”

“How would you like to improve the product you’re using now?”

“Describe your responsibilities.”

“How do you define service?”

“What does quality specifically mean to you?”

“How will you measure the success of using our product?”

“What happens when your product lets you down?”

“How can we improve our service?”

If you’re not asking enough questions, ask yourself why not.

What to Do When You Hear Nothing

Ok, you’re to the point where you’re eloquently presenting results that are sure to perfectly match what the prospect just told you he needed—or so you think. The silence is deafening at the other end. What should you do, keep talking? No way! Ask a question. Leave no doubt where their mind is.

“How does this sound so far?”, or

“Am I on track with what you’re looking for?”

If they concur, great. Continue on. But if they’re resisting, the worst thing you can do is pile on more of the same. You’ll just have to dig out of it later.

Just Ask the Question!

Some people have the habit of muddying up their questioning with “qualifiers” like,

“May I ask if . . . ?”

“Do you mind if I ask how many . . . ?”, and,

“Would it be OK if I asked . . . ?”

Upon hearing these, many people would love to react like Larry King did on his former radio talk show when he got long-winded callers who circled completely around the issue like a plane in a holding pattern. He often snapped, “WHAT’S THE QUESTION.”

Using qualifiers intimates the questioner is insecure in asking, therefore signaling that the listener might not need to respond, or at least answer directly and fully.

Let Them Finish, Even If They Didn't Understand the Question

You've probably experienced this before. You ask a question, the person answers, but they obviously either didn't understand the question, or they didn't hear it completely since their answer is way out in left field.

So what do you do? Many people interrupt and correct the person, restating the question again. But . . . by listening to the answer, as off the wall as it might be, you could gain potentially valuable information.

I remember asking a prospect, "Where do your sales reps get their leads?" Apparently he thought I said, 'What are your sales reps' needs?' because he said, "Our main need is to ask more questions. If you can help them do that, you get the business." Now that was some great information, and it was a result of him not hearing my question!

Remember, the reason you're talking to the person is to gather information so you can help them do something. The more insight you have on their feelings and beliefs—on any subject—the better off you are.

Let them finish, then say,

"I'm sorry, I don't think I stated my question properly, what I meant was ..."

YOUR ACTION STEPS

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Dumb Questions = Dumb Answers

When my daughter was around eight-years old, she was able to trash her bedroom faster than a tornado. Encountering the chaos one day, exasperated by the piles of books, clothes, and construction paper, I asked her, “Do you want me to come in here and throw away everything I find on the floor?”

“No, Daddy,” she whispered while pleading with her gorgeous blue eyes.

Well, what did I expect her to say?

“Sure Dad, throw away everything you can find.”

Then I thought about the other inane questions I’ve asked my kids while in a quasi-disciplining mode:

“Do you want to go to your room?”

“Do you want to lose your TV privilege?”

“How many times do I have to tell you not to do that?”

I guess I should follow the same guidelines at home regarding questioning as I do on the phone:

The quality of your answer is in direct correlation to the quality of your question. Ask a dumb question, get a similar-quality answer.

For example, consider the go-nowhere questions employed by some sales reps:

“Do you have any questions?”

“Do you have any needs?”

“What do you look for in a service?”

“Do you need anything else?”

“So is everything going OK with the company you’re buying from now?”

All of those virtually assure a negative response. Selling is tough enough as is, don’t make it more difficult.

Here are the same questions, with more productive alternatives. Instead of, *“Do you have any questions?”*, try,

“What were your thoughts about the performance figures in the brochure?”

“As you read the proposal, which area did you spend the most time on?”

In place of, *“Do you have any needs?”*, consider,

“What are your expansion and equipment plans for the next six months?”

“Which areas have you targeted for an increase in productivity?”

Instead of, *“What do you look for in a service?”*, use,

“What are the three main criteria you used when you selected your existing vendor? Which one did you place the most emphasis on?”

“What specifically will you base your decision on?”

Don't use, *“Do you need anything else?”* Try,

“Many customers who order the also get some to go with it. Would you like one also?”

Avoid, *“So is everything going OK with the company you're buying from now?”* In its place try,

“How do you handle it when (fill in the blank with a problem they might experience with the vendor, based on your knowledge of them.)

For example,

“What do you do when you have special orders you need with less than a week’s notice?”

Ask a vague question, get an equally vague (and worthless) answer. Be specific, be prepared, and your questions will reward you accordingly.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

15 **High-Gain Questions Help Get Buying Information**

Of the many sales publications and books I studied each month when I first wrote this book, one that always stood out was “Telemanaging.” It was written for the classified ad managers of newspapers (which itself explains why it is not around today). I frequently found great ideas adaptable to all industries, such as the one I’m about to share with you.

In “*Telemanaging*,” Anne Antony wrote about the effectiveness of using “high-gain questions. A high-gain question is an openended question that elicits high-quality information from a prospect or customer much better information than any old open-ended query.

For example, the response to an ordinary open question can be lively and interesting, but it might not require the speaker to engage in a deep thought process, nor is it likely to produce any new insights or value for the sales professional. It's like asking the person to open a file folder and read the contents to you!

High-gain questions, on the other hand, challenge the prospect or customer to engage their thinking at a higher level. These questions don't simply request basic facts or encourage surface-level small talk. Highgain questions jump-start the cerebral wheels grinding. And it's the resulting information that helps you present better information which helps them buy.

High-gain, high-value questions ask the responder to:

- evaluate or analyze,
- speculate, and/or
- express feelings.

For example,

“How would you describe success on this project?” “You’ve said that X and Y are important. Is there also a Z that fits with these two?”

“Suppose you had no financial constraints within the next fiscal year. What would you do differently?”

“What are the three greatest challenges you’ll face this year as they relate to reaching your goal?”

“How does your management feel about the problems you’ve described in dealing with that issue?”

“What are the possible implications of not dealing with that problem effectively?”

Effective high-gain questions don’t always get an immediate response. That’s good. They might pause, ponder, and then say, “That’s interesting,” or “Hmmm, I’ve never thought about that before.”

Your Plan

Before your calls think about the information you’d ideally like to have. Formulate high-gain questions to get it. Then prepare for their possible answers, and be ready with more high-gain questions to use in response.

The benefits to you in asking high-gain questions:

- The amount of time customers/prospects talk increases.
- You get better insights into their problems and needs.
- Underlying issues are exposed.
- Your image is raised, and they perceive value in spending time with you.

One final tip: When questioning, offer lots of encouragement to take the edge off the high-gain question. You don’t want to interrogate them.

Use high-gain questions, and you’ll get high-quality information!

YOUR ACTION STEPS

16 **How to Go Over Their Heads—And Be Certain They Like It**

The exasperated sales rep said, indignantly, to a prospect, *“Look, we aren’t getting anywhere, and you don’t make the final decision anyway. I’ll just call your boss.”*

The sales rep called the boss, who, by the way, had been forewarned by the jilted prospect (I wonder how endearingly the prospect spoke of the sales rep?) about the rep who would be calling. Predictably, the sales rep crashed into a stone wall.

People Don’t Like Being Bypassed

Some sales reps get frustrated dealing with people they know can’t make the final, final decision (but nevertheless can influence it, or kill it), and then leapfrog over the prospect’s head

to the boss. If the prospect is sensitive about such tactics—and most people don't like to be humiliated into feeling like a lowly underling—any remaining sliver of sales potential can go up in flames, courtesy of the slighted subordinate . . . revengefully wielding a blow torch and gasoline can.

Show How They'll Gain

But, the dilemma still exists: How do you go over their head, and have them like it?

Easy. Position your next move in a mutually beneficial light. If you truly have something of value that will help them—and you must if you're still talking to them—get agreement on that point.

“Pat, let's take inventory of where we are so far. We've agreed that this is the service that's going to help you get those projects done more quickly, and under budget, right?”

If you can't get that agreement, don't pass “Go.” This person isn't sold yet. If they do agree, then proceed.

“Ok, let's talk about what needs to happen to help you get it implemented. You mentioned that your V.P. of Operations needs to sign off on it. Will you recommend that you go with us?”

Again, get another commitment.

“Here’s an idea that might help. If you feel it would move this along, I could contact that person myself and share the information to help you sell it.

Do you think that would be useful?”

Now how do you think he would view your participation? Very favorably, of course. You’re not using his head as a ladder to the top; you’re assisting him in getting what he wants.

There are other ways to accomplish the same goal:

“Would you want me to contact Pat with this information to save you some time?”

“Since she might have some questions of you after you present this to her, would it be any easier for you if I spoke with her myself?”

“Instead of you having to take a lot of time and write all of this down, would it be any easier to get him on the phone now so we can pass it on directly?”

Steam rolling over people is a sure way to lose advocates, and sales. Let people protect their organizational and self-esteem, while at the same time helping them get what they want, and you have a formula for what you want: sales.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

Persuasive Sales Recommendations

17 **How to Make Irresistible Presentations**

The sales process is really quite simple: Get information, then give it. You ask questions which identify needs and desires, then make a suggestion based on the information you collected.

This section covers a few tips you can use right now to make your sales suggestions more powerful.

Help Them Cross the Emotional Buying Bridge

When people buy, they ultimately pass over a bridge that takes them from indecision, to the decision to purchase. And they rarely will come out and announce, “OK, I have now crossed the bridge. Close me.”

Where they are in relation to the bridge determines how you should handle the call. Here are some signals and courses of action.

- **When they're close to the bridge.** They not only talk about a need they have, but mention doing something about it.

"We have been considering making a change."

Your Action: Get them thinking more about the reasons they're interested in doing something. This will fire up the problem or need driving them.

"What are some of the reasons causing you to consider changing?"

- **When they're on the bridge.** They speak in future terms of what they will get as a result of what you're offering.

"I believe it's something that all of the employees would benefit from."

Your Action: Ask more questions to strengthen their beliefs,

"In what different ways do you think they would benefit?"

This way they make the journey on their own. A much stronger sale.

- **When they've crossed the bridge.** Listen for indicators of mental possession, meaning they've already begun enjoying—in their mind—the results of what you can deliver:

“I think we'd bring all of our reps in town for the training.”

Your Action: Solidify the details.

“That sounds like a good idea. Do you have a location in mind?”

Do They Really Care How Old Your Company Is?

I read a great excerpt from “Personal Selling Strategies,” by Richard Carlson (John Wiley & Sons). He discusses what I've preached over and over: Beginning a call with statements about your company's size, experience, or capabilities can actually hinder you.

For example, starting a call with, “First, let me tell you about our company. We're the largest manufacturer of . . . could be irrelevant to the prospect. They don't care about your company's resume—yet. They want to know if you understand their specific needs, and how you can deliver results for them.

Establishing credibility is important, but just like any other sales statement you make, it must appeal to something they're interested in. Otherwise, it could be perceived as a negative. For example, look at some of these presumed “credibility statements.”

- “*We’re the largest company of our type.*” They might wonder if they’ll get lost among all the other large customers, or if their account will attract the attention of the best people in your company.
- “*We have nine offices here in the U.S., and three overseas.*” They could think, “So what? I only have this little old facility here in North Dakota.”
- “*We’re a small company, and you’ll be working directly with our principals.*” They might feel that they’re paying principals’ rates for work that could be done as adequately by entry level people.
- “*We’ve been in business for 90 years.*” You might think this signifies stability. They might wonder if you’ve done anything innovative in the past 90 years.

All of these statements could be very important to your prospects and customers. And the time to use them is when you know for sure—after you’ve done your questioning to understand your prospect’s/ customer’s needs and desires. Examine your own credibility statements, and be sure they’re on target, and you’re using them at the right time.

Preface Your Paraphrasing

Repeating, in your words, your understanding of the prospect's situation is a great way to ensure you know what he wants, plus it lets him hear his needs, therefore reinforcing them. Preface your comments with,

"So I'm sure I know exactly what you want, let me summarize..."

"Let me ensure we're together on this. You're looking for..."

"To be certain we're thinking along the same lines..."

Restate the Need or Problem Before Presenting the Benefit

Your prospects and customers take action because they perceive what you have as filling a need or solving a problem. Before making your recommendation, restate that need or problem so it's fresh in their mind.

For example,

"It's a shame you're experiencing those billing hassles now. When you buy from us, your invoices would list each item, along with the quantity, and we'll assure you that the invoice number will always correspond to the packing slip so you'll always know what you're paying."

“and you mentioned earlier you have had problems tracking your packages. All you’ll need to do is call us, and we can tell you at any time where your package is.”

Help Them Make Their Own Decision

A person who makes his own decision is always more strongly committed than a person who feels he was sold. Therefore, after summarizing the results you can deliver, consider ending your recommendation with,

“... so for all of those reasons it looks like this would give you the results you’re looking for. What do you feel is your best course of action?”

Use Action-Oriented Words

Here are words that have a good chance of stimulating the listener to take action:

“I propose that...”

“I suggest you...”

“I urge you to take advantage of...”

“I encourage you to...”

“I invite you to...”

YOUR ACTION STEPS

Closing for Commitment

18

Get Commitment They'll Do Something

You might not close a sale on every customer contact, but you should indeed get some type of commitment every time.

If a prospect suggests they alone won't or can't make a decision, or make one now, they might be brushing you off. If you can't get a commitment from them, even a minor one, it's pretty likely they have no intention of ever doing anything. On the other hand, if they are sincere, they'll have no hesitations about committing to some type of action before the next contact.

For example, consider the scenario where you've questioned, made a presentation, and the prospect says, "I really can't do anything myself. It's going to be Jan Smith's decision. I'll talk to her and get back to you."

Left at that, you likely wouldn't get this person's enthusiastic support. Consequently, Jan wouldn't do cartwheels upon hearing it either. Instead, to get a commitment from this person you could say,

"Do you personally like the idea?"

"If it were your decision, would you go with it?"

"Would you be comfortable recommending it to Jan before I call?"

Their answer provides your answer regarding whether they're worth pursuing.

The Future Event Situation

Let's say the prospect tries putting you off because they're waiting for a future event. For example, "We can't do anything until we get our new computer system."

To deal with this, first, draw on your logic to discern whether that event should even affect what you sell. For example, acquiring the new computer system shouldn't affect the exterior landscape service you provide. You could ask in a justifiably confused way,

"I guess I'm not following you Mr. Prospect. How are those two decisions related?"

Some stallers throw out any excuse—some, absurd—to get salespeople off the phone. Most work quite splendidly because they're not questioned.

On the other hand, if their future event must precede the purchase of what you sell, you should get commitment he/she will buy from you when that event takes place.

“When you do get your new system installed, can I be the one to provide that maintenance contract?”

“When you do decide to open it up for bids, can I be one of the first to receive the Request for Proposal?”

“When you do have an overflow situation that requires bringing in temporary help, will you call me to provide those people?”

Be sure they're not stalling you, and then go for the strongest commitment you can get today which will move you closer to the sale.

Commitment Statement/Questions

This technique takes a statement, but voices it with an upward inflection so it's delivered as a commitment question.

“So, I've answered all of your questions?”

“Sounds good to you?”

“We're ready to move forward?”

“This is the one you'd like to go with?”

Assume Only When They've Implied Interest

If you use the old Assumptive Close before any signals of agreement have been expressed, you'll likely come across as pushy, which fuels resistance. On the other hand, if the person is mildly agreeing with you, it's in your interest, and theirs, to begin using "as if" phrases to solidify their feelings. For example,

"... and when you use the new machine you'll notice..."

"... and who do you think you'd designate as the main user?"

"... where do you think you'd put it?"

"... how would that work in your office?"

"... when would you schedule the training?"

Compare New to the Old

When your product or service will replace what the prospect is now using, try the New/Old comparison.

Compare the differences in the actual benefits, which should naturally slant in your favor, and then ask which they prefer. For example,

"Dawn, as we have discussed, both your present supplier and my company are selling virtually the same product. But, we will provide you with a savings on shipping costs because of our proximity to you, plus our turnaround time is quicker, which will come in handy when you need orders rushed. Now, with all of that in mind, which way are you leaning right now?"

If they have no other objections, and admit a preference towards you, wrapping up the sale should be a cinch.

If You'll Ultimately Get a "No," Get it Today

Far too many sales reps clog up their follow-up files like a Los Angeles freeway during rush hour with prospects who can't or won't make a decision. It's better to get some decision, rather than let them mst. John Fuhrman of Universal Underwriters is quoted in "*Selling*" magazine about what he did as a sales manager at a car dealership: he made an offbeat proposal, offering \$50 to the salesperson who got a firm "no" from the greatest number of pending prospects. The result was exactly as he suspected. The sales force ended up making 12 appointments and selling eight cars. All from people who were "pending" and asked to make a decision.

Get Commitment When Addressing Objections

You should also use commitment questions when you run into problems and questions (objections). I like to use them in conjunction with the "**Let's take that out of it**" technique.

After hearing an objection, remove the key problem area from the equation, and then ask them if they would commit to what you're offering.

"Paul, let's take price out of this scenario for a moment. Just looking at my offer based on what you're getting, is it the one you'd get the most value from."

“Let’s look at this a different way. Let’s just forget that we’re not located in your city for the sake of conversation. Judging what we have, compared to what you’re now getting, what would you say is the better choice for you.”

“If you didn’t use experience as one of your criteria, would we be the one you’d choose?”

These questions help them commit they’d buy from you, *after* you deal with the issue you’ve taken out of the equation. Your job then is to build the value of what they like to a level greater than their perceived problem.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

19 Use the Theory of Contrast to Get More Than You Expect

Negotiators use a technique called the Theory of Contrast that's just as applicable in sales. It states that you should ask for more than you expect to get, or, offer less than you expect to pay.

It's called contrast since the price, amount, or ultimate solution arrived at appears small contrasted to what was originally asked for. A few examples I've encountered just recently:

- my 11-year old son needed athletic shoes (we used to call them gym shoes). He dragged me over to the life sized cutout of Shaquille O'Neal, displaying the new cushion soled, air injected, water cooled (I think) shoes, well into the \$100+ range. "You've got to be kidding," I shrieked. "No way!" He

sulked over to another display and meekly handed me a “basic” Air Jordan. Surveying the price to be a mere \$69, compared to the shoes that ought to come with an instruction manual, I felt like I hit the lottery. It wasn’t until later I realized he deftly executed the theory of contrast.

- I listed for sale a piece of commercial real estate at \$20,000 over what I hoped to get. An offer came in \$15,000 below my asking price. Done deal. They felt good, as did I.

When you ask for more than you expect it establishes a psychological standard in the mind of the other person. If such a standard already existed, say, a price the other person was thinking of paying, the much higher asking price immediately raises that level. For example, just the other day I went shopping for a nice, quality, leather desk chair. I didn’t know the going prices. My expectation was, oh, maybe \$300. Wrong! My eyes were opened, and suddenly my spending ceiling had risen over the \$1000 mark.

Investment professionals do this all the time. They’ll ask a prospect if they have \$50,000 to invest if the opportunity was right. This not only scares away the people who have no intention of investing, it often raises the starting amount that an interested investor might start with, maybe from \$5,000 up to \$10,000.

Lets Them Feel Good

The Theory of Contrast also allows the other person to feel good about the transaction. It gives them a victory. All negotiating should be win-win, and this helps accomplish that objective. If, for example, you're authorized to drop prices to win business, you should always start with the full price, which is more than you expect to get. In the sales process you could use the lower price as a concession in exchange for getting a larger order. Here are a few action tips for using the Theory of Contrast,

- **don't make a larger request if it's not in the buyer's best interest.** In other words, don't go for large sales just to pad your own wallet. It'll come back to bite you later. Your customers resent having money tied up in things they can't use. That's not good for repeat business.
- **get rid of your own self-imposed limits.** Michael Kalmonson, at the time the Sales Manager of Windsor Vineyards, showed me the cubicles of two people who, he explained, were of equal experience, education, and natural ability. But one outsold the other by about two-to-one. The difference? The higher seller asked for *case* orders of wine, while the other only suggested a few bottles at a time.
- **be reasonable.** Get crazy with your requests, and no one will even consider countering.

Think small, and you'll get small sales. Think, and ask big, and your results will be proportional.

Big Asking Ideas

Some suggestions for asking big. (Of course the numbers shown here are all meaningless; focus on the approach.)

"Have you thought about how many you want, 100 maybe?"

"Based on what you told me, it seems that 2,000 units should be a good start for you. What do you think?"

"Would 90 be enough for you?"

"I recommend you start with 10,000."

"What did you want to start with, a five year agreement?"

YOUR ACTION STEPS

Objections

20 **Understanding and Addressing Objections**

Over the years I've compiled many asinine, archaic sales techniques. Many of these must have been written by sales theorists who've never sold a thing in their lives. You've likely heard some of the nonsense:

"The first one who talks, loses."

"Close three times on every call," and the one that is most laughable, "The selling doesn't start until you hear an objection."

I've long maintained that salespeople, by talking too much, create more objections than ever existed in the first place. But virtually every book on sales deals with overcoming objections, which itself implies a winner and loser. Most of this stuff

suggests retorting with a slick answer that might indeed prove the objector's stance illogical, therefore demeaning the person.

And this is supposed to help the person buy? Not in the real world.

The only way to deal with objections professionally is to get the other person talking so you can understand the roots of the problem. Only then can you deal with it effectively. What you're really doing is slamming it in reverse, backing up, and revisiting the fact-finding segment of the call. Then you continue with another benefit presentation, if appropriate, after you've gathered sufficient information to answer the objection.

Objections Mini-Clinic

Here's my mini-clinic for objections: Brainstorm a list of every objection you hear, and then think of opening questions you'll use to get the person talking, and subsequently explaining their reason for the objection.

For example, here are a few ridiculous "objection-overcoming techniques I've actually read in books by authors you'd likely recognize, and then I'll provide opening questions you could use instead.

Objection: “I have to talk it over with my spouse/partner/accountant, etc.”

One sales pundit suggests you ask a series of questions about other things the person buys, such as groceries or office supplies . . . and extrapolate that cost over the course of a year, and then say,

“Look you spend over \$12,000 per year on groceries without your husband’s permission. I’m sure he won’t mind making this \$200 a month decision on this car, will he?”

Would you feel comfortable saying something like that? I think not!

Sometimes this “talk it over” response is indeed an honest obstacle; often it’s a blow off, and yet other times it’s a sign of indecision. To deal with this effectively you first need to find out where they stand. Start with,

“Ok, well, let’s talk about that. Is this something that you’re personally sold on?”

The answer will map which route you’ll follow. If they are sold, they probably do need to get an OK from the other party; if they’re not sold, you should either spend more time with them or punt.

The High Price Question

Objection: “Your price is too high.”

Scripted Answer: *“These cast-iron tools cost 25% more than the others, but consider the lifetime guarantee! The cheaper ones will break in a few years and you’ll need to replace them. You get far more than you pay for here.”*

Again, how can you deal with this with the confidence of knowing that you’re on target? You can’t until you get more information. Maybe the budget, not the quality, was the issue here. To answer it, begin with,

“Hmmm, before we talk about that, I’d like to find out if price were not an issue here, are my tools the ones you prefer?”

If so, then you can question further to help solve their problem of either not having the money, helping to raise their perception of the value, etc. But if they’re not sold yet, price isn’t really the issue.

Objections are answered with questions, not by lecturing. You won’t change someone’s mind. They’ll only change it themselves. All you can do is ask carefully-devised questions to help them doubt their own beliefs, which in turn makes them more receptive to your ideas.

Here are additional tips for effectively dealing with resistance and objections.

Never Tell Them They're Wrong

The next time anyone says something you even mildly disagree with, say to them, “That’s ridiculous. You are flat out, unquestionably wrong.”

The reaction you’ll get is similar to what’s heard when sales reps use inane objection “rebuttals” that inherently laugh in the face of people’s reasoning and make them feel like topsoil. Instead, take the painless, productive approach.

Listen. Don’t cut people off when they disagree or object. Let every last drop drain from their system. The more they talk, the less logical their objection will seem, particularly if they ARE wrong. It’s infinitely better if they realize that themselves. Even encourage them to keep talking.

Take the blame for any misunderstanding, They’ll be more openminded.

“Based on what you’re saying, I realized I didn’t explain some things in enough detail.”

“What you’ve said helped me understand that I neglected to present some information that’s pretty important here.”

Ask them more questions. You'll never change their mind by talking at them. You can get them to chip away at their own beliefs by asking questions, which also helps you understand why they say what they do. For example,

"When you say the price is out of your range, what time frame are you using in evaluating the total return?"

"How often within the past year have you had to send work out because your existing equipment was either down, or in use?"

"Have you ever looked at...?"

"What if?"

"If you did do this, what would...?"

"Let's assume you already did this, how would you...?"

"Let's just paint a picture here..."

The objective is to take their mind off their resistance, and help them imagine themselves already using and benefiting from what you have. And that's the best way to sell.

Objections answering isn't a debate, with judges flashing scores with each logical statement made. The only score that matters is if your prospect/customer feels you can help him, and you'll never accumulate those points by telling him he's wrong.

The “We’re Happy” Excuse

When the “We’re already buying from Zygot Company” barricade is thrown into your path, ask,

“Under what circumstances would you consider using another source?”

If that doesn’t prompt an immediate answer, help them a bit,

“How about emergency situations where your supplier is out of stock, and you need something in a hurry?”

“How about on items that you feel you might be paying too much for?”

Help Them Decide

ASAP Software Express sales rep, Mike Porter, suggests a question when faced with the “Let me think about it,” delay from a prospect or customer.

“If you were to make the decision right now, do you feel you have enough information from me to do that?”

If they say they do, a logical follow-up would be,

“And what would that decision be?”

Question the Objections

When you hear objections, don't tense up. Ease up instead. Don't give the prospect/customer the feeling you're ready to pounce on them. Get curious, and calmly discuss the reason for the objections. Start out with phrases like,

"Let's talk about that question."

"Let's discuss that."

"That's an interesting comment. Let me be sure I have a good understanding of it."

"Tell me more about that."

Once you've "softened" them, then you can proceed with your questions to understand the real reason behind their objection.

WHY?

When you encounter an objection, your mission is to find out why the objector says what he does, and then you're in a position to address it. And how you do it makes the difference between opening them up, or making them defensive and even more resistant. For example, blurting out "Why?" like an indignant teenager questioning his parent's intelligence, will alienate them. Soften your inquisition. Use a curious tone of voice. Query the reasoning behind the decision, not the choice itself.

*“Oh, I see. How did you happen to choose them?” Or,
“What led to that decision?”*

Turn Brush Offs Into Opportunities

Perhaps you’ve had buyers try to brush you off in this way:

“I’m satisfied with who we’re using. What’s your turnaround time?”

In other words, they punctuate their attempted brush off with a question, which is really a sign of interest. Pick up on this opportunity by responding with your own questions.

For example,

“Well, that answer really depends on the job. Tell me about your...”

“Normally when I hear the price question, there’s some sign of interest. Is there?”

“I could give you a much better answer to that after I learn a little about how you’re now handling .

Qualifying the Delay

Cynthia Everhard-Widen with Schneider Communications had a prospect who said,

“Call me back in six months. ”

She responded,

“I’ll be happy to. What’s going to make that a better time for you?”

Then she followed up with,

“Let me ask you a few questions now so I’m prepared for the next time we speak.”

She managed to qualify the prospect more fully, collected a lot of good information which helped her on the next call, and built valuable rapport with the prospect which poured the foundation for a relationship.

What Does “Too” Mean?

When you hear resistance prefaced with the “too” adjective, determine their frame of reference. What does “too” mean? In relation to what? For example,

“It’s too much money right now.”

“I see. What are you comparing the amount to? What amount did you have in mind?”

“We have too many things going on right now to consider a change?”

“Oh. What will have to happen in order to create a calmer situation?”

“The space is too little.”

“What size did you have in mind?”

How to Handle the “Send Literature” Request

Here’s one way to treat the “Send literature” request to determine if it’s a brush off:

“I could, but really, it might not do you much good at this point. I don’t know enough about what you do to make the literature relevant. Let me ask a few questions first so I can send something more meaningful.”

Find Out What Theyll “Think About”

When you hear, “Hey sounds good, let me think about it,” the least productive response is,

“Great, give me a call when you’re ready to do something. ”

Here are suggestions much more likely to determine where they stand, and to help them take action.

“I’m glad you like it. Which parts do you feel are the best?”

“I agree, it does seem like a nice fit for what you need. What do you think you’re going to do?”

“What will you base your decision on?”

“What is the probability that this is what you’ll ultimately do?”

“What’s the next step after you’ve done your analysis?”

YOUR ACTION STEPS

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Don't Create Objections

After a sizable direct mail drop to sell subscriptions to my “*Telephone Selling Report*” (now “*Smart Calling Report*”) newsletter, the expected stream of telephone sales calls arrived—most of them badly executed. Here’s one.

After introducing himself and his company, the rep, without pausing, went into his pitch.

“I received your sample mail piece, and we are a mail list company that does merge-purge, mail list de-duping, demographic and psychographic coding . . .” (He continued on for about a minute, but had lost me at this point.)

When he came up for air I said, “Of all the services you mentioned, the only ones I need are handled by my mail house.”

"Oh. Is everything OK with them?" he asked.

"Yep," I responded.

"Well, keep us in mind."

"OK." Right.

Analysis and Recommendation

The guy should have *read* the sample newsletter he received before calling me. Undoubtedly would have had a better call.

His opening was abysmal. All I heard was, *"We, we, we, we, product, product, product."* I didn't care what he sold. When I take a business call, I'm concerned about how I can grow my business, get and keep more happy customers, and make money. He should have said something to appeal to those needs. For example,

"We specialize in working with direct mailers in helping them cut down their postage and printing expenses by minimizing wasted mail, while at the same time increasing their response. My purpose for calling you is to ask a few questions about your mailing process to see if any of our many services would be of value to you."

The next step in the call process after the opening is questioning. Instead, he spewed his entire pitch at the beginning, thus

creating an objection he wasn't prepared to manage, therefore ending the call. The opening example I presented above would have transitioned nicely into questioning. He'd likely want to know about what I mail, how much, how often, the response rates, the cost, and so on.

On a well-executed call, after some of the basic qualifying questions, a prepared rep with superb product application knowledge then picks a potential need area and layers need-development questions to place the prospect in a receptive frame of mind for a presentation.

"Any idea of how much you're spending on postage and printing for your duplicate mailings?"

Even though this call quickly went down the tubes, he *still* could have tried a last-gasp effort after I told him my mail house now handles "the only ones I need." An obvious question to me would have been,

"Which ones are those?"

At least it would have gotten me talking about my situation, as opposed to the go-nowhere question, *"Is everything OK?"*

Before your calls, think of what your prospects want, allude to how you might be able to provide it, then begin questioning. *Only after* that process should you proceed with a presentation.

Otherwise, you have the potential to create objections, just like this guy did.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

22 **A Fine Example of How to Address an Objection**

I called the Omaha Racers (at the time, the local team in the Continental Basketball Association) basketball team offices to inquire about partial season tickets. Traveling quite a bit as I do, I had an interest in the “*Weekend Package*,” covering just Friday, Saturday, and Sunday games. (Keep in mind that I was only calling to get information at this point.)

The sales rep, Rod Higley, was helpful, and after asking me where I would like to sit, and about how much I was looking to spend, explained the various ticket prices and locations. I was leaning toward \$8 tickets, which were fairly good seats about midway up the arena.

Then he said, “Have you ever thought about getting full season tickets?”

I replied, “No, I don’t want those. There’s a good chance I wouldn’t be in town for many of the games during the week.”

At this point the guy could have opened the spigots and released a torrent of “benefits” about owning full season tickets. (Whenever I put “benefits” in quotation marks, it means features that the salesperson thinks the prospect/customer should be interested in, but doesn’t know because he/she didn’t ask questions.)

Instead, I was mildly surprised when he said, “Oh, well let me ask you, is your main concern that you’d be paying for tickets that you wouldn’t likely use?”

That got me thinking (which is precisely what questions in response to resistance should do). I placed the call thinking I didn’t want the full season because I couldn’t use them, but the fact was, what I really didn’t want was to pay for tickets that I wouldn’t use. “Yes, that’s the main problem with full season tickets for me.”

Again, I was braced for what a lesser salesperson might have retorted with, perhaps some rebuttal about how I could give the tickets away when I wasn’t using them. Sure, it would make sense to some people, but that didn’t interest me. I didn’t want to fuss with making calls, arranging details of distributing them, and many of the tickets would go unused anyway. Therefore, it wouldn’t have appealed to my real objection.

He dazzled me again, handling the call as a conversation where we were discussing a *problem*, not an objection. He wondered aloud, “Do you think you’d ever be in town for some of the weekday games?”

“Oh, sure,” I said.

“Have you ever sat in the North end of the Coliseum for games?”

“Uh-huh,” I responded, getting more curious by the minute. (By now I quit evaluating his techniques and began getting caught up in the anticipation of what he had in mind. Exactly the same feelings we all want to evoke in similar situations.)

“Did you like those seats?”

“Yeah, they’re not bad,” I said, trying to act nonchalant, recalling full well they were pretty darn good seats.

“Well I’ve got an idea here that could get you full season tickets, along with all the extras that come with being a season ticket holder, and you’ll still only pay the same amount you were planning on, plus getting seats just about as good, or maybe even better than what you were considering before.”

I leaned forward in my chair, my eyebrows raised.

“Our North end seats are only \$4. It’s a great deal. I have some available right on the aisle, just three feet from the \$6 seats.

And they're closer to the floor than what you were looking at before. I'd recommend considering these for the entire season, since you'd be paying the same as before, and getting all the games. Even what you couldn't use, you could give away and it wouldn't cost you any extra than what you were planning on spending" (Now, **THAT** was a benefit appealing to my initial objection!)

"Wow, that sounds pretty good. Can I see a map of the seating so I can make sure these are the same ones I'm thinking of?

"I'll mail one to you," he said.

"Fax it to me!" I replied.

He did. He called back. I bought the tickets right there. Full season. Four of them. And the great part is that I wasn't sold or talked at; he helped me solve a problem, and left me feeling good about the transaction.

That's how to address a problem, as opposed to trying to overcome an objection.

One That Didn't Work

Here's the opposite end of the spectrum . . . a call I received the day before I wrote this.

“Mr. Sobczak, I’m with Bank, and I’m calling to let you know you’ve been pre approved for our special VISA card. ”

“I have enough credit cards,” I retorted, spitting out the first thing that rolled out of my brain.

“I understand, ” he said robotically, *“. . . and this card has . . . ”* spewing a 60-second itemization of interest rate, grace period . . . I tuned out the remainder, focusing instead on polishing off my getting-colder-by-the-second pork chop he interrupted me from during dinner. But I let him finish, curious as to what he’d say next.

Just as I suspected,

“And with your OK, I need just a few pieces of information to get you started with this card, OK?”

“Like I just said, I don’t need another card.” He thanked me and hung up.

Poor guy. I know he was just reading his script, doing his job. But as I mentioned earlier, you can’t just rebut objections; you must get people talking, like the previous good example.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

23 **Make It Easy for Them to Say No**

Some sales literature and ill-informed trainers suggest you never, ever, ask a question to which the other person can answer “no.”

Hogwash.

The opposite approach is often more appropriate: make it *easy* for them to say “no.”

Most of us have inanimate leads curdling in our follow up files, taking up space like useless nick-knacks jammed in a junk drawer. Problem is, these prospects waste our valuable time when we call them back, when we hear the same old excuse about “not being quite ready now, call back again.” The hook is set, we’re reeled in (again), and the cycle continues.

My philosophy is . . .

. . . if you're going to hear a NO, it's better to get it as early as possible, than to waste time and money prolonging and languishing in the agony and ultimate rejection.

Take Action and Induce the Decision

I'm not suggesting that you intentionally make bad calls so you'll hear no's (although it seems many of the calls I receive fall into that category). I'm suggesting that after your fact finding, presentation, and request for commitment you determine precisely where they stand with you.

If they'll never buy from you, fine, find that out. Today.

If there is real potential and they're worth waiting for, at least make sure with evidence. Get commitment they'll do something between now and your next call.

Ask questions like,

"What's going to happen next?"

"What's the next step?"

"What's going to happen between now and our next call?"

"What, specifically, will you be evaluating?"

"When will you discuss this with your partner?"

"If you like what you see, will you make the decision to buy?"

“If you decide to move forward before my next call, will you call me so I can give my updated bid?”

I know, I know, depending on your compensation program, it can be difficult to relinquish ownership of a prospect in your system, since if they just happen to call in and place an order next month, you get credit for it. Sadly, though, some reps rely totally on this system, hoping people will call on their own to buy. But in the long run it's actually costing them, since they still have to speak with the prospects a minimum number of times per year to retain ownership. They could spend time more wisely elsewhere. My Quote-a-Day calendar recently read, “The surest way to go broke is to sit around waiting for a break.”

So, then, when should you let the person go?

You should discard them when,

- they won't give you a commitment that they will do something—anything, even if it's seriously reviewing your literature or samples—between now and your next contact,
- they're vague about time frames as to when they want to implement what you have,
- they're vague about specifically what they're interested in.

Make it easy to say no. Then deal with it. Question as to why they feel the way they do. If they're mistaken in their beliefs, perhaps you can provide additional information. Otherwise, move on to more fertile territory. Your harvest will be richer.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

24 “Feel-Felt-Found” Technique: 21st Century Version

This is about modifying the old “Feel-felt-found” technique to something more applicable to today’s sales situations. First, let me explain how I started thinking about this.

Dallas is a great city, but I just didn’t really care for the Cowboys, especially in 1994, right after they won their second Super Bowl. Something about Jimmy Johnson, the coach at the time, and Jerry Jones, the owner, that made them both seem like lounge lizards in my mind.

That was until I read an article about Jones in *“INC. Magazine.”* A few years ago, he was sitting quite comfortably with over \$50 million in the bank. He laughed in the face of logic and at experts who suggested otherwise, and put all of his own money

into buying a losing football team, the Cowboys. (They were operating at a financial loss, also.) In just a few years, he turned the team around—on the field and at the bank—and has his entire initial investment back, and the return is compounding daily. That guy really has . . . (hmm, better use the synonym finder lest someone'll be offended) . . . chutzpah.

So I'm talking to a friend who says, *"I hate the Cowboys. That Jones is such a schmuck."*

Then I used it, without even thinking: the "Feel-felt-found" technique. (If you haven't been exposed to some of the old school sales quips, you're supposed to say, in response to an objection, "I understand how you *feel*, many others have *felt* the same way, but after they *found* . . .") I said to him,

"You know, he really comes across that way to lots of people. I felt that same way about him . . . thought he was your typical sleaze-bag owner, but then I found out something about him I didn't know."

"What's that?", he said, following the script perfectly.

I went on to explain the story. "Wow! He really has (hmm, fortitude).

I still hate the Cowboys, though."

In analyzing the “FFF” technique, the psychological principles are pretty sound. You’re,

1. empathizing with the person regarding their beliefs, therefore not accusing them of being wrong;
2. letting them know their belief is also held by many others, and,
3. providing additional information to help them doubt and question their belief, which is the best way to answer resistance. But used in its old form, it’s as moldy as green bread growing in the back of your fridge.

What’s also lacking in the old version are questions. Before you deploy this technique, you should make sure you’re dealing with the reason behind the objection. Let’s give examples in each area.

Updated-for-the-21st-Century Version of the Feel-Felt-Found Technique

1. Soften, Then Question the Objection.

“I see. Is that what’s stopping you from using us as a secondary vendor?”

“Let’s talk about that. Aside from the lower rating, is there anything else that would prevent you from going with our proposal?”

2. Feel

"I realize where you're coming from..."

"I understand what you're thinking..."

3. Felt

"... and I've heard that quite often..."

"... and that's the same thing a lot of my present customers told me initially..."

4. Found

"... and you know, there's something else here you might want to consider..." PAUSE

"... but there's a few other pieces of key information a lot of people aren't aware of..." PAUSE

Practice these steps. The key is to make sure it doesn't sound salesy.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

25 **Don't Confuse Reflex Resistance With Objections**

No one likes being “sold.” It leaves a distasteful feeling . . . like we were just “taken,” pressured into something we’d rather not have done.

That’s why people, when given the opportunity, avoid even getting into a sales situation. You do it, I do it, your prospects do it. You hear it in the form of brush off’s such as,

“We don’t need any.”

“I’m happy with my present service.”

“I’m not interested.”

“I’m busy right now.”

And you know what? Brush off's usually work! However, since brush off's are instinctive reflex responses, they are very shallow. There is no real reason behind them, other than the natural human need to protect ourselves from being sold. Here is a very important point regarding brush off's that will help you not fall victim to them:

You can stand up to the brush-off by getting the other person talking. Then their mind is off their reflex response, and on your question.

Let's look at one.

Prospect: "Hello, this is Joan Stevens."

Caller: "Hi Ms. Stevens, I'm Mike Hamilton with Heartland Supply. We specialize in providing low cost mailroom and packaging supplies. I'd like to discuss your mailroom and what you use to determine if what we have would be of any value to you."

Prospect: "I'm happy with my present supplier."

Caller: "I see. Who are you using now?"

Prospect: "We buy from Packing Plus."

Caller: "Oh. What do you get from them?"

Prospect: “Well, we buy the standard boxes, padded envelopes, tape, plus a few specialty items.”

Caller: “Tell me about those . . . the specialty items.”

Prospect: “In our operation, we often send out large orders that require . . .”

There was resistance at the beginning of the call, a reflex response that stated, “We’re happy with our present supplier.” Some sales reps would have said, “Oh, OK. Keep us in mind if we can ever help. Bye.” Instead, this caller was curious. He acknowledged the response, and asked more questions, therefore melting the resistance by getting the other person to talk.

Asking a question is effective because it takes the prospect’s focus off the stall, and engages them in answering a specific question. Any time you can change the subject from the brush off to a substantive topic, you have essentially ignored the brush off while gathering useful information in the process.

It’s very difficult to deal with a vague general statement like a reflex response. That’s why they work so well for prospects. But, when you get someone talking, you have more information to deal with, which helps you ask more relevant questions, and make points of interest.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

Ending Calls Effectively, and Setting Up the Next One

26 When to Send Literature, And When It's Just a Brush Off

You've probably heard it before: "Yeah, why don'tcha send me sumthin on that?"

That request sends sales reps scrambling for the literature racks, and their PDF attachments.

But is the literature request a sign that the prospect or customer really is interested and needs something visual, or is it a plain and simple blow-off?

My personal rule is that people need to see something when the **result of using** the product is visual—and the product or service itself is rarely the result.

For example, I was considering a printer that had HD quality. The result I needed to see was a sample of the actual output of the machine; I really didn't care about literature on the machine itself.

Other reasons why people need literature or samples:

- the person is visually-oriented,
- your contact must sell other people on your idea, therefore they need visual and physical backup,
- your credibility must be established in their mind. For example, if it's a cold prospecting call, they want to be assured you're a reputable company, unlike the scum-of-the-earth rip off artists who ply their trade by phone. I received a call from a guy pitching—and I mean pitching hard—the “opportunity to invest in wireless cable television franchises.” More interested in his approach than his “opportunity,” I asked him to send me something (to see if indeed he was credible). Not that literature by itself would legitimize his operation in my mind; the *lack of it* would unequivocally disqualify him. (By the way, despite promising me a prospectus and video, not surprisingly, I received nothing.)

When It's a Stall

Let's look at instances where the literature request is likely a tactic to send you on your merry way.

Normally it's when they can't get specific about,

- what they're looking for,
- what will happen if they like what they see,
- when they would do something, and
- the next time you should talk.

If you can't get specific answers to questions regarding these areas, save your stamps, and a tree. Don't bother sending anything. It's likely they don't have the heart, or the guts, to tell you they're not interested.

Questions to Ask

Here are questions you should ask to determine if you have someone worth sending information to.

"I'll be happy to send you material. So I can highlight some things for you, can you give me an idea of specifically what you might be looking for?"

"If you like what you see, then what will happen?"

"If you like what you see, will you buy?"

"By when will you have had a chance to go through the material so we can speak again?"

“When do you feel you’ll be ready to make a purchase?”

“Have you already decided you’re going to make this type of purchase?”

“When should we speak again? Will we be talking about the details of a purchase at that point?”

Raise Their Expectations

Additionally, presell them on what you’re sending. If you say you’ll send out a *“packet of stuff,”* they’ll give it about as much attention as the seed catalogs addressed to “Occupant” piled on their desk.

But consider if you instruct them to,

“... turn to the page that I’ll have marked with the neon green post-it note, and check the volume pricing I’ll have highlighted.”

You’d have a greater chance of the material getting seriously looked at.

Literature can be a nice complement to the sales process. Use it wisely, when it’s warranted.

Following Up on Literature Requests

Many of us receive requests for information from inquirers from the web, by phone, and mail. When following up on these

requests—before sending the material—you have a great reason for speaking with the respondent, and getting them involved in a conversation. Use it. For example, you could open a call with,

“I’m following up on your request for information on our Super Expander service. I’m going to send that material to you, and I wanted to make the package as useful for you as I can. Tell me about how you’re using...”

Likewise, you could use something similar if the screener asks why you’re calling.

“Ms. Davis requested information on our Super Expander, and to provide her with the best materials for your situation, I’ll need a few questions answered.”

You should even seize the opportunity by saying,

“And before I speak with her, you could probably answer some of the questions.”

Be Sure You Personalize It

When you do send out information after speaking with a prospect, be sure you add the personal touch. With sophisticated technology, many firms grind out boilerplate letters and proposals with very little personalization. If you want to have an impact, make sure that each proposal, and all correspondence

shows that you've done your homework. Be as specific as possible regarding the person's unique situation. Don't ever take the chance that two separate prospects might compare proposals and learn you haven't done your homework.

(SOURCE: "communication briefings")

YOUR ACTION STEPS

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How To Ensure You Have a Good Reason To Call Back

S **scenario One:** The sales rep gazes at his computer screen, trying to remember a prospect he called six months ago. Apparently he got nowhere at that time, since the minimal notes say, “Not interested now. Try again in six months.” That day has arrived. Instead of calling, he pages to the next contact, avoiding placing the call, since he realizes there’s no more potential now than there was six months ago.

Scenario Two: The same rep looks at another account. The notes say, “Call back when we change the quantity discount schedule. Tom said he would give us a trial order when the new prices become more competitive with his present vendor, AJ Industries.” The prices have indeed changed, and the rep is excited about calling, and places a successful contact.

What's the difference here? In the first situation, the rep likely concluded an unsuccessful call she months ago with,

"So can I give you a call back in about six months or so?", with the prospect responding with a polite brush off:

"Yeah, sure."

However, the second situation provides a reason for calling. A reason the prospect/customer said he would have genuine interest in. So why not set up all your follow-up calls in this way? Here's how.

1. **Qualify them for the future.** After concluding there's little potential on this call, determine if they are even worth pursuing. Ask,

"Don, you mentioned you'll begin carrying roofing supplies starting in September. Would you like me to call you then and discuss how we could help you maximize profits with that line, and generate add-on sales?"

2. **Get a commitment.** Get agreement.

"Assuming we have something you like, would you be agreeable to buying from us?"

3. **Schedule the call.** Make detailed notes about why you'll call back.
4. **Have a great opener.** For example,

“Don, it’s Pat Keeler with Building Suppliers. The last time we spoke, last May, you asked me to contact you about your plans to expand into roofing supplies. I’ve put together some ideas that have worked very profitably for other wholesalers across the country, and if I caught you at a good time, I’d like to discuss your plans.”

If you plan on clinging onto a prospect, hoping they might magically turn into a buyer, take *chance* out of the equation. Find out specifically if there is potential, get commitment, and you'll find yourself with valid reasons for calling back. And you'll save time by discarding the people who will never buy from you.

Use the ACTION Model During and After The Call

Planning a great follow-up call means having great notes from the previous call. So, what should go in your notes after a call? I use my ACTION sales model as a prompt for what I should cover during the call, and what's to go in the notes after the call so I can plan for the next one. Each letter of the word “Action” represents a category of information I need, or something I'll do.

Authority. What is the specific decision making hierarchy, including users, influencers, money controllers, etc. This is much more than just the name and title of the decision maker. It's the entire journey the decisionmaking process needs to take.

Commitment. What did they commit to DO as a result of the call?

Timing. When will they buy, and when will we speak next?

Interest/Need. What, specifically, are they interested in, and why?

Overview. Did I summarize at the end of the call what is to happen next, before our next contact.

Notes. It all goes in the notes.

When Should You Call Back?

In determining when to follow up with a prospect, don't simply say, "*So when should I call you back?*"

Instead, tie your request into the action they promised to take:

"By when will you have had a chance to run the numbers against next year's projections?"

When they agree to do something by a certain date, they're more committed to it, and it naturally minimizes the chance of hearing, "I haven't got around to it yet."

YOUR ACTION STEPS

Prospecting

28 **How To Win the Business From Their Present Supplier**

If you place prospecting calls in attempts to win business from a competitor you probably often hear, “I already buy from X-Company,” or, “We’re happy with who we’re using.”

The disastrous route at this point is to respond with a pitch explaining why your company is better. It’s confrontational, and only causes the other person to harden his defenses.

Another strategy is to simply make a quick exit, which might not be bad, depending upon your industry, and the quality and quantity of names you have to work on. Many stockbrokers take this route. After all, repeatedly running into a brick wall, rebounding off, reloading and ramming into it again isn’t the most efficient use of time if you have stacks of other leads staring you in the eye. Plus it hurts after a while.

But if your prospect pool is relatively finite, you can't afford to burn through names. You need to take the next step.

Get Them Talking

Your best approach is to engage the person in a conversation about why they selected their present vendor. Once you know what influenced that behavior, you have an insight into what to say so they'll consider you.

But don't say, "*Why did you choose them?*" The reason is that "Why?" puts them on the defensive. It forces them to justify their selection. And it can be interpreted as an attack of their reasoning. You might as well poke them in the side with a sharp stick and then try to sell to them. Saying, "*Oh I'm sorry to hear that,*" or, "*Any particular reason you use them?*" has the same effect.

Instead, you want to ask questions that open them up, build rapport, and ease into a conversation about how they chose their supplier, again avoiding the stern "Why?" word.

For example,

"How long have you been using them?"

"What influenced the decision to select them?"

"What prompted the decision to go with them?"

Notice that the last two questions take the emphasis off the *person*, and place it instead on the decision. It's non adversarial, and is a soft way to get them talking.

The Competitions' Weaknesses

Once you've gotten his mind on talking about his supplier, ask questions designed to extract information not only on what his needs are, but also to point out your strengths and the competitors' weaknesses. For example, if you know XYZ Company has poor quality along with their low price, instead of blatantly slamming their workmanship, you'd ask a question to shed light on it:

"How often do you have customers return for service because of defective parts?"

Make a list of similar questions for each of your competitors.

But in some cases the prospect still won't budge. Then your best tactic is to keep the door open for the future. Here are additional questions to consider.

"Do you have a backup supplier?"

"What type of contingency do you have in place if something were to happen where you needed something in an emergency?"

"If anything were to happen, could I be on the list of people you would consider?"

"Could I be in your Rolodex?"

Selling against someone's existing vendor can be difficult—if you make it that way. Instead, get them talking, and you might find out exactly what you need to do to get your foot in the door.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

29 **Prospecting Pointers To Help You Profit**

Most of what I've covered with you thus far in the book can be used on prospecting calls. This chapter presents a bunch of brief tidbits to help make your prospecting easier.

Your Best Source of New Prospects

Let's start with selecting who you should call in order to get the best results. In an issue of *"Registered Representative"* magazine, Steve Moeller gives valuable information on something most people should do more of: get referrals.

He cites a study done for the Securities Industry Association showing that 86% of surveyed customers would recommend their broker to friends, but only 12% said they had ever been asked.

Another study found that a referral is up to 15 times more likely to do business with you than a cold prospect is. Here are a few of the specific tactics he suggests to get more referrals.

- **Show appreciation for a customer's business.** Send a thank you note, or even a small gift if appropriate, thanking your original customer for the business. This further rewards your customer for doing business with you, personally.
- **After you've ensured you have a delighted customer, position yourself to receive a referral.** Explain that you are in business to solve problems and help people like him.
- **Describe the ideal referral.** Continue with,

"I've found that the people who can benefit most from my services fit this description..."

Paint a clear picture of who you can help most, so they can easily visualize the scenario.

"Typically they're growing businesses that find their existing computer system causes people to wait to get information, and also means standing in line to get things printed."

- **Ask for the referral.** Make your request.

"Who's the first person or company that comes to mind?"

Don't say anything until he mentions a name.

- **Help him focus.** Prompt him with clues.

“What about suppliers, other business owners, members of your association?”

- **Use the address book.** Ask him to go through his Rolodex or contact management program on his computer.
- **Gather information.** Ask for information on each person to determine how closely they fit your ideal profile.

(SOURCE: Steve Moeller, writing in “Registered Representative” Magazine)

Go After Given-Up On Prospects

Have any prospects that you've spoken with previously, and you know should be buying from you, but yet you've come up empty thinking of new ways to approach?

Here are some conditions under which you should consider reapproaching these prospects.

New Policies at Your Company. If you change restrictive policies that would enable you to do business with people who didn't qualify in the past, call them again. For example, if your minimum order size has been dropped, you're now carrying a

line that they asked for before, but you didn't have, or you've lessened credit requirements.

New Regime at Your Company. If, for example, new management has cleaned house and improved quality, decreased errors, etc., call again, since you're now selling a new company.

New Capability. If you have products or services that deliver results you weren't able to before, call again.

New You. Maybe you fell to pieces and blew it on a previous call. Since then you've acquired more skills and confidence. Maybe you've come up with new ideas, or a new strategy. Call again.

(SOURCE: "Increase Your Sales Success," by Thomas Quick)

Plant Seeds and Harvest Them Later

I'm passionate about landscape gardening . . . planning, designing, selecting the trees, shrubs, and flowers, and then tending and watching the collection grow into a delightful masterpiece of color and texture. We should also garden on our calls.

What I mean is planting proactive seeds which have a chance of being harvested later—on calls that don't result in a sale, ending by planting something to think about in the prospect's mind . . . something that just might prompt them call you in the future.

Let me illustrate this by giving an example of how not to do it.

Ending a call with, “*So keep us in mind, OK?*” is one of the most worthless phrases sales reps ever mutter. I wonder how prospects manage to keep a straight face as they say, “Oh sure, I will.” This is like when you say to someone, “*Hey, we should get together sometime and do lunch or something.*”

Instead, tell the person what future unfavorable circumstances they should be on the lookout for, which just happen to be problems you could solve. For example,

“Ok Ms. Carpbreath, it doesn’t look like I have a fit for what you need today. Here’s something to keep in mind, though. When you do notice more and more of your direct mailings being returned because of bad addresses, we do have a software program that could help you reduce that number, and save the printing and postage expense. I’ll send you my card, and please keep it in the file you work from when you’re planning mailings, OK?”

Notice the last sentence. It asks—or tells—they to place the card or (literature) in a place they’ll see it when they’re most likely to need it. Do the same. Tell them, to put it in their Rolodex under “Widgets,” in their project file, in their contact management program, or wherever they can easily access it when they have the need.

Three Ideas to Help Your Attitude

When prospecting keep in mind,

1. The last call has nothing to do with the next. One name on a list shouldn't affect the quality of the next.
2. Everyone is interested in ideas which will help them. Conversely, no one wants to be bothered by a salesperson who simply wants to sell a product or service.
3. Talking to people generates income. Stuffing envelopes, walking around, and reading reports does not.

Be Unique to Set Yourself Apart

You need to set yourself apart from the competition in order to stand out in the minds of your prospects and customers. And your competition not only includes people selling the same products/services as you, but other sales reps using the phone, selling anything, also vying for the person's time.

Chris Nielsen with Advanced Life Support Systems sells to physicians. Very busy people. As a result he's usually not able to reach them on his prospecting call. Since his intention is simply to set a face-to-face appointment with the doctor, he doesn't need to speak with him or her personally; office managers and assistants often set the physician's appointments.

Chris' tack is to first send out a personalized letter to the doctor explaining how his equipment could help build the doctor's cash flow and patient load, and he'd like to meet briefly with him or her to ask questions in order to show them how. He gives the doctor the option of responding to him directly, but closes by stating he'll call the doctor's office for an appointment.

And his secret technique: he sends along a pre-printed post-it note saying,

*"Please schedule Advanced Life Support for an appointment.
They will be calling this week. Thanks!"*

Chris instructs the doctor to sign the note, give it to the office manager, and let her know that Chris will call soon.

Imagine the importance this little pre-printed post-it note now carries in the office manager's mind!

The results are pleasing. Chris says that when he calls, often the office managers say, "Oh, yes, Doctor said you'd be calling. Just a minute, I have the note here somewhere . . ." Think of what you can do to set yourself apart from the competition.

Say the Day Also

When suggesting a time for a phone appointment (or a face-to-face appointment), say the day of the week also. For example,

“Will you be ready to discuss the proposal by next week, let’s say Wednesday, the 17th?”

By mentioning the day, people are more likely to remember if they have prior commitments, i.e. regular staff meetings, etc.

An Idea for Openers

Here’s a prospecting opening idea you might want to try or adapt.

“Hi Ms, Blank, I’m with . My company specializes in (fill in the ultimate result of what people get from buying from you, i.e. helping grocers reduce the amount of spoiled produce they dispose of because of spoilage). We’ve had quite a track record of success with companies similar to yours, and I’d simply like to ask you a few questions to see if it would be worth our while to talk about some possibilities.”

Then, proceed with your questioning before presenting.

Prosper With Positive Self-Programming

Matt Oechsli, author of *“Winning the Inner Game of Selling,”* says that the Garbage In/Garbage Out model applies to our behavior and achievement, just as it does with computers. Many non-achievers suffer from negative programming. Pull out paper and a pen and complete this model with your own examples.

Garbage In (Misinformation)

1. “I don’t like prospecting.”
2. “I’ll never achieve my goals.”
3. (Write your own)

Garbage Out (Behavior)

1. Call reluctance.
2. Lack of achievement drive.
3. (Write your own.)

Positive Input

1. “I love to prospect!”
2. “I always achieve my goals.”
3. (Write your own.)

Positive Output (Behavior)

1. Consistent prospecting activity.
2. High achievement drive, doing what’s needed.
3. (Write your own.)

(Source: *“Winning the Inner Game of Selling,”* by Matt Oechsli)

YOUR ACTION STEPS

Self-Motivation

30

How to Get, and Stay Motivated

My philosophy on motivation is that everything we accomplish in life can be 10% attributed to what we know, and 90% to how we feel about doing it. If your internal flames burn perpetually, I'm betting you're an achiever.

And you also know you can't look to other people and things to motivate you. It has to come from within. In this chapter I'll give you tons of ideas you can pick and choose from . . . ideas that can keep your motivational fires ablaze.

Whenever I need to fan the flames—as we all do to keep them roaring—I'll scour my volumes of self-improvement books and tapes and dive in. Better yet, I love attending seminars. Here are some tips I picked up years ago from the master motivator himself, the late, great, Zig Ziglar. I've included my comments.

Too many people concentrate on what they don't want instead of what they want. For example, take the sales rep who hopes he or she doesn't quickly get brushed off the phone. With that attitude, the inevitable happens. An interesting phenomenon is that we tend to experience what we fear most. A woman at a seminar confessed to me that she's so surprised to make it to the questioning part of her call that she doesn't know what to do from there. Play to win, instead of to not lose.

On goals . . . if you're thoroughly committed to achieving a goal, and you run into difficulty (which you inevitably do), you look for solutions. On the other hand, the person without a focus on a goal, and the accompanying commitment, tends to throw in the towel or accept mediocrity when faced with dilemmas.

What you do off the job determines what you do on the job. You likely have adequate time at work to learn and build skills which allow you to do a passable job. But becoming a superstar relies on the extra effort you expend, the reading, listening to tapes, and practicing you do on your own.

One thing worse than training people and losing them is not training them and keeping them. Enough said.

Motivation gets you going; Habits get you THERE. I'm sure most of the 2,500 who left Zig's seminar felt inspired, entertained, and motivated. But only those who take his excellent ideas and make them habits will realize the true prosperity everyone says they want, but few actually attain.

Motivational Lessons From the 1994 Orange Bowl

If you're a college football fan, you likely know of Tom Osborne, head coach of Nebraska. (If you're not, this isn't a story about football, so stick around!) He said and did some profound things during the 1993 season that we all can apply in our sales careers.

Background Info: The Nebraska team went undefeated during the 1993 season, moved to the top of the polls, and played Florida State for the national championship in the Orange Bowl. But never before had a top team taken such a negative bashing and received such little respect from the national media. Because of its arguably soft schedule, history of bowl losses, being in the Midwest, etc., the media writers were as ruthless as Tonya Harding's bodyguard. And although my actual involvement with that University consisted of spending just my freshman year there—mostly wandering around to parties—before transferring to Creighton University, I, like most people in the state who feel like part of the team, couldn't help but take personal offense to the sportswriter know-it-alls.

What's fascinating, though, and what I personally learned from, is the way Tom Osborne reacted to all the huff.

TV Interviewer: "Coach, what are your feelings on what is being said about your team?"

Osborne: "I really don't care much about what people say. It doesn't matter, and it doesn't change anything. And I can't do

anything about it anyway. All I can control is the way we prepare for the game.”

What a great lesson for those of us who open ourselves up to potential resistance every time we pick up the phone! In the whole scheme of things, so what if we get a “no”? Who cares? We move on to the next one. What we *can* control is the way we prepare ourselves.

Interviewer: “Would winning the national championship be the defining event in your career?”

Osborne: “You guys place more importance on that than I do. Sure, it would be nice, but what’s most important to me is that my players play at a championship level. That’s important to me, and we accomplished that this year.”

And just like in sales, we shouldn’t focus on just that one big sale. Our goal should be to play at the highest level possible. Accomplish that, and consistent sales are the result.

Interviewer: “So are you saying that you get satisfaction from just playing the game?”

Osborne: “Getting the ring can be anticlimactic. And for most people it’s a once or twice-in-a-lifetime event. I get joy from the pursuit. And that’s a feeling that never goes away.”

I can identify greatly with that. I've closed some big-time sales in my career, but to this day, the real joy for me is in the sales process itself, interacting with prospects and customers, choreographing a symphony of questions and statements that helps move the prospect to a decision that he/she feels is in his/her best interest. It's intoxicating! The persuasive power you potentially wield is mind-boggling. Napoleon said, "We rule men with words," and I firmly believe most of us get our enjoyment out of that pursuit of helping by using verbal suggestion.

FOOTNOTE: Nebraska outplayed Florida State in the Orange Bowl, and came within inches of making a field goal that would have won the game on the last play. Asked if he felt vindicated after the game, he responded, "I always knew what kind of team we had, and had confidence in them. It's you guys who likely feel different."

And yet another lesson for us: what *happens to* you doesn't change *who* you *are* in the big scheme of things. Several "no's" in a row doesn't make you a bad salesperson. It should just help you to prepare more intently for your next call.

FOOTNOTE 2: As I wrote this during the final edit of this book, in December of 1994, Nebraska once again went undefeated during the regular season, compiling a perfect 12-0 record, nestled comfortably atop the ratings polls, and scheduled to play Miami—on its home field—for the national championship in the

Orange Bowl. And Coach Osborne did get his first championship. And then added a couple more before he retired.

Keep Growing

If you don't continually challenge yourself with new risks, and new learning, you'll never rise more than fractionally above your present level of achievement. It would be like a second grade student closing his mind to all learning after memorizing the ABC's, never making the quantum leap to spelling, reading, and perhaps even writing a best seller some day! Think about, and start acting on, the challenges you want to tackle.

Get Out of Your Zone

Want to get more motivated? Describe in very sensory terms the goal or circumstances you desire. Then map out in precise sequence what action you need to take to move from where you are, to where you want to be. These actions will represent activities outside of your comfort zone. Start with the first one, focus on it and work on it until it becomes more comfortable. Then tackle the next one. Taking risks is exciting (although not comfortable for many people). But the only way you'll grow is to work outside your zone.

Excuses for Not Placing Calls Will Earn You Nothing

It's humorous, albeit in a dark way, pondering the excuses I've heard over the years by reps for not placing calls. There are a few people (now out of telesales) who adhered to this schedule, with the corresponding excuses.

8:00-10:00 Mornings aren't a good time to reach people.
They're all in meetings.

10:00-10:30 I take my break.

10:30-11:00 People are usually involved in projects, and tough to reach.

11:00-2:00 People are either getting ready to go to lunch, at lunch, or coming back from lunch, and are tough to reach. I take my lunch during this time.

2:00-3:00 Early afternoons aren't good because people are in meetings.

3:00-3:15 Break

3:15-5:00 No use calling people. They're busy getting ready to end their day. I leave.

I've actually heard all of these! And for some reps, they go for the big excuses. They'll blame Mother Nature: *"Spring/Fall/Summer/Winter isn't a good time to call."* Or perhaps it's the leads: *"These leads aren't any good. None of these people are buying."*

Your attitude becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. At the same time I've seen reps whining about leads, time of day, season

of the year, I've watched other reps ring up huge sales . . . by methodically grinding away at their work, believing (correctly) that they alone control their destiny. They know their performance isn't dictated by the leads, or the time of year. They understand they won't reach *anyone* if they're not dialing the phone.

Excuses never make money. Action does.

Guard Your Attitude

Judy Owens with Norfolk Southern, told me what she has done to keep a positive attitude:

"I decided a few years ago that I wasn't going to let the little things bother me. Just like I protect my house from being robbed, by locking the doors and windows, I keep myself from being robbed of a positive outlook. I refuse to let other things or people take that away from me."

How true. Only you can allow yourself to be victimized by external circumstances when it comes to your attitude. Refuse to let anyone, or anything, take it away from you.

Say You'll Do Something, Then DO IT!

I called the contractor who built my house to mention a few additional minor items that still needed fixing. He hurriedly responded "Yup, yeah, yep, we'll get right on that." And I'm

thinking, “Right. This has about as much of a chance of happening as the Cubs winning two World Series in a row.”

Based on this builder’s history of failed promises with me I wasn’t really surprised that no one showed up. And that’s definitely not the image of reliability you want to portray.

Here are a few common-sense rules to keep in mind.

- **When you say you’ll do something, make your word be an ironclad commitment.** Don’t compromise. If all of your material possessions were taken away from you today, you would still have your reputation, which is earned by sticking to your word.
- **Write down what you commit to.** Select a time at the end of the day to batch and complete your commitments.
- **Let people know what you will do for them.** Be specific, say it with confidence, and earn *their* confidence. For example,

“Pat, here’s exactly what I will do for you. I’m going to walk this down to Order Processing...”

This also works well when soothing an upset customer. What they want most is to know that someone cares, and is doing something about their situation.

As an added bonus, when you perform a task for someone, they psychologically feel indebted to you. Dr. Robert Cialdini, author of *“Instant Influence,”* calls it the Law of Reciprocity. He cites the Hari Krishnas giving out flowers at airports as a way this principle is utilized. Even though the people don’t want the flowers, they feel obligated to give something.

If you say it, DO it. You build up a reputation. And that’s the reputation you want.

Clear Your Mind of The Negatives

Here are tips for clearing your head of any negatives that might pull down your productivity.

1. **Ask action-oriented questions after calls.** Instead of thinking, *“That call really stunk,”* say,

“What would I have done differently on that call?”

2. **Judge success by your attempts.** Don’t dwell on negative outcomes. Instead, congratulate yourself on your activity. (Just be sure it’s *quality* activity.)
3. **Don’t take yourself too seriously.** Be able to laugh at your mistakes. So what if you blew a call? Learn from it, laugh it off, and move on.

4. **Remember that only you can allow yourself to be rejected.** Rejection is not an experience. It's your *definition* of an experience. So change your definition!
5. **Energize your body!** Feeling as blah as a beached seal? Jump out of your chair. Take a brisk stroll. Put a bounce in your step. Poke your head outside and fill your lungs with fresh air. Even if you have to force it, plaster a smile on your face. The mind will eventually follow the body's lead, and you'll coerce yourself into feeling good!

How to be Enthusiastic

Act enthusiastic, and you will feel enthusiastic, according to "*Believe and Achieve: W.Clement Stone's 17 Principles of Success.*" (Avon Books) Here are some of his ideas.

1. **Talk loudly.**
2. **Talk rapidly.**
3. **Emphasize.** Stress words that are important.
4. **Hesitate.** Pausing after a word you wish to emphasize accentuates the emphasis.
5. **Put a smile in your voice.** Do it by putting a smile on your face, and a smile in your eyes.
6. **Modulate.** Vary your pitch and tone.

Your Own Imagined Limits are Always Closer Than Real Ones

Here is just a sampling of statements I've heard from salespeople.

"The most talk time per day we can do is about 180 minutes. "

"I don't have much luck in the afternoon getting a hold of people. "

"Around 25 calls a day is the most I can do. "

"I max out at \$40,000 every year. "

"Smaller prospects aren't worth calling. "

"There's not enough time to get everything done. "

"The bigger accounts are out of my league. "

"Having high goals just sets you up for failure. "

For the most part these are self limiting perceptions that, unfortunately, transform into very real behavior. The cycle continues, the feelings harden, and the believers then find it even more difficult to reach those synthetic limits.

I suggest addressing limits like you would objections. Question them. And similar to objections, it's astounding how they can evaporate, clearing the way for opportunities that were always there, yet clouded by the limiting beliefs.

What do you believe are your limits right now?

Ask these questions:

- Upon what **solid evidence** do I base this belief?
- Has exceeding this limit ever been done before, by anyone?
If not, why not?
- Who is getting results greater than my self-imposed limit?
If so, how?
- Why couldn't I do more and better?
- Do I really have the desire to crash through this make believe barrier? Can I create the desire?
- What do I need to do in order to break out of this limit?

What really gets my own adrenaline coursing is spending time with people who act as if achievement is a foregone conclusion. The thought of falling short of their goals is not even a possibility. Do you know anyone like this? Spend time with them, and it's virtually impossible to not get swept into this infectious behavior.

A self limiting believer would say, "The month/quarter/year is half over. It's too late to set out on an ambitious goal program. I'd never reach it." What are you saying right now?

Learning = Earning

What do you think the number-one hobby is among Fortune 500 executives? It's reading, according to Jay Conrad Levinson, in his book *"The Ninety Minute Hour."* Sure, some of that reading

is undoubtedly leisurely, but for most, the reading is educational. (And we haven't seen much in the news lately about CEO's earning too *little*, have we?)

High learning = high earning. I recall attending a seminar by Brian Tracy, and he asked, "What do you think you'll find in abundance in the homes of every self-made millionaire? Books!"

So what does this have to do with your success in selling by phone? Everything.

You are the sum total of your life's experiences thus far. The only way you can better yourself and get better results is to do things differently. And the best results come through acquiring more knowledge, which builds confidence and desire, which then translates into action.

Books—and newsletters and tapes—help you to accelerate the learning process, since experience isn't necessarily the best teacher. Practice doesn't make perfect. *Perfect* practice makes perfect.

No time to follow a self-study program? Think again. Analyze how much time per week you spend,

- watching TV,
- perusing mind-numbing literature such as the Enquirer, People, etc.,

- driving to and from work, or anywhere, with the radio blaring.

Still think you couldn't squeeze in a few minutes per day investing in yourself and your future income stream? Think again. Most of us can. Very easily.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not suggesting you need to purge all leisure activity from your life. Far from it! I can channel surf with the best of them, and I get really cranky if I miss an issue of Baseball Weekly. But I know unless I'm constantly pouring new and challenging self-development material into my head, I'm stagnating, or worse, letting the brain get a little mushy around the edges. I also know my best ideas are germinated from books or other literature, and by listening to tapes. And I hear the same from every super successful (and wealthy) salesperson I've ever been in contact with.

Want to make a quantum leap in your self development? Click past the Fiction and Autobiography pages on amazon and head for the Business and Self Improvement areas.

The mind is like a muscle. Feed it. Exercise it. Stretch it to the point of failure. It grows, and so does your income and opportunity.

Don't Dwell on the Previous Call; Focus on What You'll Do Next

This tip came from, of all places, a golf magazine. The instructional article explained that most people who consistently shoot poorly get frustrated and upset after a bad shot. The negative feelings and self-talk linger into the next shot. And the debilitating thoughts continue, affecting each subsequent shot. Have you ever had days on the phone like that? The article suggested that after a bad shot—or call, in our case—immediately focus on your next shot. After all, you can't do anything about what has passed. Place your emphasis where it belongs: on what you can and will do next.

Motivate Yourself!

Let's imagine for a moment. . .

. . . your boss calls you into his/her office. You're informed that unfortunately there are going to be some major cutbacks in the staff. People in sales would be able to keep their jobs only if they signed a commitment to do several things:

1. Every minute they're at work display an achievement-oriented attitude.
2. Think of one thing they could do that would increase their sales production a minimum of 15%, and then **do it**.

Now, would you be willing to make that commitment? Why not do it now?

The key here is the **desire** to do it. If you're focused on that one goal, the activity that will put you over the 15% increase, it's amazing how obstacles don't seem significant any longer. Resistance doesn't appear to be the morale-squashing rejection it once appeared as.

Get working on your own 15% . . . and don't stop there!

More on Attitude

Car sales expert, Joe Verde, lists a few excellent points on attitude in his newsletter, *"Selling Cars Today."*

1. **Always remember your attitude makes the difference.**
Don't let your attitude be something that just happens to you; focus on it constantly, and make a success-oriented attitude a top priority.
2. **The more sales and people skills you develop, the better your attitude becomes.** Increased learning breeds more selfconfidence. Which in turns squashes negatives thoughts that formerly bogged you down.
3. **Develop your success desire.** Don't just want or wish for something; make it a burning desire. You won't have time to

worry about negatives. Develop your wants into clear goals, prepare a plan, and carry them around with you daily. Read them several times a day. You'll find your wishes become reality.

4. **Discipline yourself.** Take charge of your career, and always head in the positive direction. Verde also adds in another article, "You don't need to be a natural to be a professional; you just have to admit you could do better, and then just keep learning all you can."

(SOURCE: Joe Verde's "Selling Cars Today")

YOUR ACTION STEPS

31 **Control Your Time, And You Control Your Destiny**

The sands of the hourglass represent dollars in your pocket, *if* you're squeezing the maximum productivity from your available time. What's pathetic, though, is watching sales reps fritter away what could be their most prolific periods.

Take a look around at starting time. You might see people drifting about the office, some shooting the bull, others reading the mail or email. Some are on Facebook. Others yet might be planning their day. Although the latter function is essential to your job, when you arrive at work isn't the best time to do it (unless you arrive before the regular business hours of the time zone you call).

Set aside one of these blocks of time for your “planning session”:

- **before you leave at night.** Your phone energy has likely been spent for the day; why not prepare for tomorrow?
- **on your commute home.** Before you mentally hang it up for the day, review your accomplishments, and set your agenda for tomorrow.
- **before you go to sleep.** Researchers say that whatever we read, study, or ponder over before retiring tends to stick more vividly in our minds.
- **while exercising.** It’s a fact that you feel better about yourself mentally, you’re more motivated, and have more energy when you work out regularly. It’s a great time to plan your next day. I prefer morning exercise and I’m typically at the gym by 5am, mapping out the day, and starting before most people in my time zone are even up yet.
- **on the commute in to work.** Everything’s still fresh when you walk in the door, and you’re ready to tackle the phones.

You can’t manage time—only what you *do* with that time. It’s one of the greatest ways to instantly increase your performance and income.

Secrets to Converting Sales Leads

Speaking of time, think of how much you're spending trying to converting prospects into customers. Jim Obermayer, V.R. of Sales for Inquiry Handling Systems wrote a pamphlet about the *"Three Sales Secrets That Successful Salespeople Hide."*

Secret 1—The rule of 45 says that 45% of all leads turn into a sale for someone. Many salespeople believe that only 10% of their leads turn into sales . . . because they stop following up after 90 days.

Secret 2—Great salespeople follow up every lead until the prospect buys or dies. Over 50% of leads aren't followed up. But if a lead is just a few months old, there's an 80% chance the prospect hasn't bought anything yet. A six-month old lead still has a 50% chance of converting.

Secret 3—The older the lead, the fewer sales reps who are calling on it. The victories go to the disciplined persistent few who follow up, while the others have given up.

Let Them Give You a Call Back Time

Don't tell someone you'll call back in a *"couple of weeks."* That's vague. Ask them when you should call back, and tie it into the action they said they'd perform for you. For example,

“By when do you feel you will have had a chance to read through the proposal, and prepare your inventory figures.”

They’re more likely to adhere to a date, and take action on the commitment they give you.

On Controlling Your Time

Make immediate decisions on over 80% of the items that come to your desk. You won’t be any better prepared to act on them tomorrow or the next day. Plus, by not acting, the paper piles up like a snowdrift, and gives the psychological feeling of being “swamped.”

Even More Time Tips

Here are a few tidbits that appeared in an article called *57 Ways to Save Time*, in the Premier Issue of “***Selling***” magazine.

- **Don’t rely on memory.** Document all telephone calls and transactions so you have a clear history of the account the next time you call.
- **Disconnect the snooze button on your alarm.** (Try exercising, reading, or even leaving for work earlier if you tend to steal a few extra minutes of slumber.)

- **Perform a leading task that will get you to tackle head-on whatever you've been sidestepping.** Pull out the file of that difficult account you're avoiding, begin your pre-call planning and dial. You'll be halfway there before you can talk yourself out of it.
- **At the end of the week, dump the contents of your "in" basket into the trash.** If it was important, you likely would have gotten to it. If you do pitch something urgent, someone will send it to you again.
- **Leave your next day's schedule on voice mail before you leave.** Call in after hours if you get ideas at home.
- **Have a peer review meeting.** Alec MacKenzie, author of *The Time Trap* reports dramatic sales increases among sales people who meet weekly with peers to discuss three key areas: number of sales calls, closing ratio, and profit margin. He states that reporting to fellow reps exerts more pressure than sales managers. He says, "If you have to stand up for 10 minutes to explain why you failed to meet your goals, you'll work extra hard not to embarrass yourself the next week."

Get Back To Business

Left unchecked, idle chit chat can take off like a runaway freight train, and be just as difficult to stop. To reroute your conversation back to business—tactfully—try,

“Oh, Mary, I have one more important idea I wanted to cover with you...”

“Well Pat, let me summarize what we’ve covered so far...”

Both start with the person’s name, which immediately seizes their attention. Then it diverts them back to what you’ll do next.

Reduce the Number of Sales Calls

You can make more efficient use of your time by reducing the number of calls you make in your sales process, says Gerhard Gschwandtner, Publisher of *“Personal Selling Power.”*

1. **Eliminate the Need for Callbacks.** Try asking for an order on every call. Top performers quickly get to the heart of a prospect’s problem and ask for the order sooner. Average sales people get too involved “romancing” the prospect.
2. **Move Information Faster.** Top salespeople eagerly cut out unnecessary steps in order to close sales with fewer calls over time. Instead of mailing a proposal, fax it the same day. If the prospect has a tough question, put him on hold and conference on the expert in your company who can answer it. Incomplete information is one of the main reasons people delay buying. Deliver better information faster, and you’ll take fewer calls to do it.

How You Can Beat Procrastination And Do It Now!

Ever have the feeling you're expending more energy avoiding a task instead of actually diving in and doing it?

Procrastination is an ailment that debilitates salespeople. Not only does it create guilt and anxiety about not getting things done, it obviously pulls down sales results.

What causes procrastination? Fear of failure, and/or of success, says Jane Burka, author of ***Procrastination: Why You Do It; What to Do About It,*** (Addison Wesley Publishing). Regarding the fear of failure, she says that it's more acceptable to believe you've failed to reach a goal by putting it off, than to believe you lacked the ability to reach it.

Conversely, there's the fear of success. Some salespeople put off prospecting, since they feel that by reaching and beating sales goals, they'll be expected to exceed higher ones each month. They'd rather not face the new demands success can bring.

What To Do About It

Registered Representative Magazine recently listed ways some stockbrokers said they dealt with procrastination:

- **Use power-blocking.** Break your calling day into 45-minute, onehour, or other segments that work for you. Take breaks in between. And do nothing during your power blocks but call.

- **Don't put away time talking to other sales people.** They won't buy anything from you.
- **Break huge tasks into manageable chunks.** Opening an entire new territory could seem like a goliath-sized task. But slicing it down into a series of bite-sized morsels makes the mountain easier to scale.
- **Schedule unpleasant duties for your own "up time."** Those parts of the day when your energy level is the highest. It's easy to procrastinate when vigor is dragging, so find easy, mundane tasks to do during those times.
- **Don't anticipate how prospects will respond.** Often, procrastination is a result of saying, "Oh, this person wouldn't be interested, I won't call him." Most successful reps realize that by simply calling instead, they're pleasantly surprised.
- **Schedule a specific time for tasks you'd usually rather avoid.** For example, setting aside Wednesday morning as Prospecting Morning can provide the impetus to dive right in.
- **Don't let unpleasant jobs age and pile up.** Just like rotten food, the longer it sets, the more foul it becomes, and the more you avoid it. Do these tasks the first thing in the morning. You'll feel better knowing that you'll quickly get them out of the way.

- **Make tasks you avoid more pleasant.** If you fear prospecting, learn more and better ways of doing it. You'll boost your confidence, and won't avoid it.)

YOUR ACTION STEPS

**Great Stuff That
Didn't Fit In Any
Other Section**

Writing a book wasn't so hard. Getting all the ideas placed into neat little categories *was*. Thankfully, I was able to fit most of my material into the sections that represented the logical progression of the call.

Then I had other things that were left over, which are good, but didn't blend in nicely with the sections we've covered so far. That's why I've created this catch-all section—kind of like that file drawer you have with stuff too valuable to throw away, but not really fitting in anywhere else.

Dive in, enjoy, take action, and profit!

32 **Get Momentum to Close the Sale**

I often give treatment in my seminars and in my newsletter to the topic of addressing objections . . . what to do and say when you hear a flat out “no.” Jonathan Crawford called me and suggested what is even more gut wrenching and esteem-numbing is a “maybe.” Or worse yet, a follow-up file packed with maybe’s.

How true. We’ve all likely experienced the exhilaration of chasing “huge” prospects, interpreting their words as interest and intent. However, similar to the cartoon of the carrot on a stick—with the other end attached to our back so the prize is just out of our reach—there’s a lot of mad chasing, but no getting. And just like when we’ve reached the top of the roller coaster ride, the bottom eventually falls out, our attitude plummeting along with it.

Crawford pointed out to me that maybe's are devastating to the "Big Mo's" of sales: morale, and momentum. When you stare at a stack of callbacks with a never ending litany of "Still considering. CB in 6 wks," in the notes, the monsters of call reluctance and self-doubt perch on your shoulder and whisper in your ear, "*Why should you make any more calls? Maybe you should have taken that delivery job at Dominos.*"

Yes, maybe's can be devastating. To minimize their occurrence, I'll add one more "Mo" to Morale and Momentum: MOvement. (Ok, so it doesn't rhyme.)

You can lessen the number of wishy-washy responses you hear by seeking movement on every call you place or receive. Movement defined by the prospect/customer doing something as a result of your conversation that places them closer to the ultimate objective of buying from you. In my seminars we call it taking ACTION. If they aren't doing anything, or aren't willing to, your momentum has stalled (if it was even there to begin with), and you're wasting your precious time by pursuing this person.

How to Ensure Movement, High Morale, and Momentum

1. **Develop a Decision=Success Mentality.** Equate getting a decision—yes or no—with progress. I've always said that if I'm ultimately going to get a no, I want it today . . . not six

weeks, six months, or six years from now. Why waste time where the fish aren't biting? Move on to the prolific areas. Not to suggest that you should blaze through leads like Liz Taylor goes through husbands without regard for the quality of your calls. Striving for action ensures the quality is there.

2. **Clear Out Your Existing “Slugs.”** These are the people contributing to your gray hair, loss of hair, or harriedness. The ones who tease you with their feigned interest. Call them all with one objective in mind: get a decision, yes or no.

“Mr. Boffo, we’ve talked quite often over the past nine years about how we can help you decrease your materials expense. I’m wondering what the probability is that we can get you started within the next two weeks.”

If their answer is a definitive no, find out why, and address it if you can. If not, which is more likely, since they probably weren't a real prospect to begin with, congratulate yourself on a successful call, and move on.

3. **If You're Scheduling a Call Back, Know Why.** What have they committed to DO as a result of this call? “Lemme consider it,” doesn't cut it. What will they consider, using what criteria, and what will happen next and when? After all, if they're not doing something between now and the next contact, why would you want to call them back?

4. **ASK for More Decisions.** A major cause of “maybe’s” is the absence of an explicit request for a decision, or commitment to do something. If you’re shy about this, deal with it.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

33

We Need to Be P.C. On Our Sales Calls

It's interesting how things have changed over the past 20 years regarding political correctness. The term was just germinating back then. In fact, I began this chapter with, "What's our society coming to? We've got to stop the insensitivity towards people, the selfish treatment towards others that's spinning out of control. We must begin treating certain groups of people tenderly, or they rightfully will become (more) offended. I believe we need to be PC. on our calls."

Well, today a hot topic is that we are becoming **too** politically correct. OK, got that out of the way. Back to being PC on our calls...

Persuasively Correct, that is. Towards prospects and customers.

Being Persuasively Correct means that all of your thoughts and actions are focused on helping the customer or prospect buy.

Here are a few examples of Persuasively Incorrect behavior, and suggested PC. remedies.

With Screeners

Persuasively Incorrect:

"Just tell him it's a business matter, he'll want to speak with me."

PC. behavior:

"Depending on what he's doing/using now in the area of, there's a possibility I have something that could help him (fill in with benefit). I'd like to find out more about his situation to see if this would be worth taking a look at for him."

Opening Prospecting Calls

Persuasively Incorrect:

"I'm Dale Johnson. Can I take a few minutes of your time to tell you about our company?"

"I'm with Dumblebum Corporation, have you ever heard of us?"

"I want to talk to you about our products."

"I sent you some literature, didja get it?"

RC. Behavior: Here's the message you want to get across during the first seconds of a prospecting call opening statement.

"We have something here that could potentially be of great value to you, I'd like to find out more about you to see if it's something you'd like more information on."

All you need to do is plug the words that adapt this to your types of calls and prospects.

Asking Questions

Persuasively Incorrect:

"Got anything you need a quote on?"

"Do you have any needs?"

RC. Behavior: Ensuring that your questions are proactive, have a specific purpose in mind, and prompt the listener to explain a specific need or problem.

"What specifically, would you like the results to be after the program?"

Sales Presentations

Persuasively Incorrect: Presenting before questioning.

RC. Behavior: Questioning before presenting.

You Know You're P.C. When . . .

Determine how many of these Persuasively Correct behaviors you regularly exhibit on telephone calls.

- You pause after asking questions, and after they answer, letting them tell you everything that's on their mind.
- You recognize the most important person on the call isn't you.
- You never interrupt the other person.
- Your goal is to help prospects and customers get what they want—not to push products or services.
- On every call you place, the other person can say they gained something by talking to you, even if they didn't buy.
- You have a specific, action-oriented call purpose every time you dial. As a result, your opening is prepared, as well as the direction you want your questioning to take.
- Your benefit presentations are short, since people base their buying decision on one or two key benefits. They don't care about everything you *think* is a benefit.
- You understand and accept that everyone will not buy; sometimes there's not a fit. Therefore you don't try to argue with these people, spitting out canned objection rebuttals.

- You believe that if you ultimately are going to get a “no” from a prospect, it’s better to get that decision early, rather than wasting your time and theirs with bothersome follow-up calls.
- When you agree to call someone back, you both know why; you’re both doing something as a result of this call, and the relationship is moving forward.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

34 **What Purchasing Agents Like—and Hate—About Sales Reps**

At my son's end-of-season baseball party, I was small talking with one of the other Dads and asked him, "So what kind of work do you do?"

"I'm a Buyer for a large paper goods company," he said.

Most people would probably force a smile in response, politely say "Oh, that's interesting," and excuse themselves over to the munchie table.

Not me. What a great learning opportunity! I continued with the questions.

“What do you dislike most about salespeople?” “I can’t stand the salesperson who calls me, and immediately says he has this great product and then goes into a pitch about it, or wants to come to my office and waste my time in person. Almost all of the time, their pitches are way off target.”

“So, you suggest they should ask questions before giving you a presentation?” “Yes, but not the most basic questions. If someone calls my company, and they have to ask me what we do, how many locations we have . . . things they can get from others in my company, or information that is common knowledge, they don’t have a chance. I want someone who has done his homework.”

“What else doesn’t work with you?” “People who make claims that they can’t back up. For example, a rep might tell me he has good quality. I want to know what statistical process measures are built into their manufacturing operation. He’d better know it. If a rep claims to have better service, I want to know what happens if we need a truckload of product and it’s 4:50 Friday afternoon. She’d better know what the policy is on that.”

“Anything else that’s sure to turn you off?” “The old, back slapping, How ‘ya doin’ buddy, can I take you to lunch? -approach. I know why they’re calling. If they can do something for me, which is all I care about, I want to find out—quickly.”

“You sound tough. What *will* work with you?” “I can’t believe I’m any tougher than the next guy. What I want is someone who knows my business, knows the competition, knows his or her product inside and out, and can apply that knowledge to what I want. And they need to be able to get my attention quickly by telling me what they might be able to do, and then be prepared with questions so they can then learn what I want. Then they’re in a position to make a presentation. And by the way, low price isn’t a big concern of mine. Getting the best value over the long haul is.”

So there we have it. The same things I continually advocate—straight from the mouth of a guy who buys for a living. Compare your approach to what this buyer said. And, please, always approach your calls from the perspective of what the buyers want, not what you want.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

35

Selling on the Inbound Call

The Vail, Colorado condo reservations sales representative handled my inquiry call superbly.

I liked the style of the youngish-sounding—but mature—guy instantly. He questioned me about what I was looking for, and took a genuine interest in what I wanted.

After giving my requirements, he waited for the appropriate available matching condos to appear on his computer screen. Then he enthusiastically described one to me:

“Oh, you will absolutely love this place. Mountain view, your kids will have a great time splashing in the hot tub and pool, and after a long day hitting the slopes, you just ski to the back door—no schlepping your stuff several blocks with the kids dropping their poles and skis all over the street.”

Sounded great to me. (No wonder. It was exactly what I told him I wanted. Such a simple technique, but practiced so infrequently.)

I asked the price.

“Let me see here. I CAN’T BELIEVE IT!”, he screamed as if he’d just matched all six Lotto numbers.

“They lowered their rates. This is a great price!”

“What is it?!” I panted.

“You’re pretty lucky to get this. It’s only \$ per night!”

So why didn’t I *feel* lucky?

“Oh,” I responded, hoping to get into something less than monthly car payment range. “Well. . . how much better can you do?”

“Better?”, he said in a “You’ve got to be kidding me”-tone of voice.

“This is Vail, man.”

Oh, of course, I wasn’t thinking.

“But there is some bad news here. Here’s the downside: I won’t be sure until tomorrow if I can get this for you.”

“Well, *what time tomorrow* will you know? Will you call me?” This guy was smooth. Let’s examine the dynamics at work on this call.

The Principle of Liking

Dr. Robert Cialdini, author of the program, “*Instant Influence*,” lists “Liking” one of his “Five Principles of Influence.” Simply stated, if people like you, it’s infinitely easier to get them to cooperate, listen, share, and ultimately, buy. And to paraphrase Dale Carnegie of “*How to Win Friends and Influence People*” fame, you’ll get more people to like you by talking about them, than you will talking about yourself. This guy asked me questions, but most importantly, *sincerely listened* to—and later used—the answers, and made me feel he genuinely cared that I got what I wanted.

I’ve long preached that people will look for what they expect. Meaning, if you preface statements with,

“*You’ll love this...*,”

“*And here’s something you’ll really enjoy...*,”

“*You’ll be excited about this...*”

you’re subliminally creating positive expectation that people will look for, and realize. Dr. Donald Moine, in his program, “*Unlimited Selling Power*,” expands on this notion, stating that skilled sales reps are able to help customers drop into a level

of hypnosis, getting them to relive a pleasant association or memory, which leads to a purchasing decision. And they feel good about the decision, because they made it! This sales rep did exactly that with his description, and the way he prefaced it.

He did the same with the price. Built up my expectation like a kid preparing to dig into the presents on Christmas morning. Even though I thought the price was out of line, he held his ground, and helped me realize it was really my *expectations* which were out of line—not the price or the value.

Overall, a nicely handled call. Study the techniques at use here, and adapt them to fit your type of call

Why are They Shopping?

If you ever get unsolicited inquiries from people who are “shopping around” and considering switching from their present vendor, don’t forget to get one very key piece of information: WHY are they shopping?

Before you launch into a presentation be sure you question for exactly what they’re looking for, and be sure to include,

“What’s caused you to leave your existing supplier?”

You can uncover a major problem that had pushed them over the edge, a dissatisfaction with the product or service, or anything

that so moved them to call you. And that likely will tell you exactly what you need to say to help them buy. Also, this can help uncover credit risks; maybe their existing supplier dropped them.

Make a Recommendation Before Sending the Material

At a training seminar I did for Video Arts (the training video firm featuring John Cleese of Monty Python fame), Mark Smithivas made a very fine point on handling incoming calls.

Video Arts generates inquiries through a variety of sources, including “*Wall Street Journal*” ads. Many people call and ask for a catalog; others call asking for information. Smithivas suggested that instantly steering an inquirer toward a catalog might be bypassing an immediate opportunity. For example, asking questions about the person’s need at that point, and making a recommendation then and there could eliminate the need for the catalog and result in a sale on that call.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

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How to be a “Real” Salesperson

I’m sometimes asked, “What are your best tips to quickly become a real slick-talking salesperson? You know, someone who could sell furnaces in the desert. How can you become the person who can sell to people who don’t want to buy.” Here is how you can be a real “salesperson.”

1. Think “Sale By Any Means” Before Your Call

When preparing for the call, if you decide to do any preparation (many real salespeople don’t need to, they just wing it) think, “How can I move more product today?” Psyche yourself into a ME frame of mind. Do whatever you can do to get product out the door. If you **don’t** want to be a salesperson, instead think about the prospect, and what **THEY** might want before the call.

2. Steam Roll the Screener

You need to be, well, downright devious with these people. After all, they are the enemy. All “salespeople” try to intimidate the screener. The rejectionists try to pry information out of you, but don’t give it to them. Ask them in a condescending tone, “Oh, excuse me, *do* you make the buying decisions there?” With the real tough ones, just tell the screener it’s a personal call. And whatever you do, always answer their question with a demand of your own to put them on the spot. For example, “Yes, my name is Joe Brown, thank you. Now will you please tell him I’m on hold?” Nonsalespeople will actually spend time talking to the screener, sometimes even explaining why the boss will be interested in what they have. What nonsense! Everyone knows the screener can’t make the buying decision!

3. Open Calls By Talking About Yourself

Begin with something strong like, “Hi, I’m Joe Smith with ABC Corp. We’re the largest and best manufacturer around, and I’d like to tell you about our company so I can earn your business.” Or, if you’re an outside sales rep, say, “We sell _____, and I’d like to come out and show you what we have. Would 2:30 or 4:00 on Thursday be better?” Nonsalespeople tend to put the focus on the prospect, and say something wimpy like,

“We specialize in working with people in your industry helping them to (then they insert something here that the listener might actually want, can you imagine?), *and to see if this*

would be worth your time to take a look at, I'd like to ask a few questions about how you handle similar situations now."

4. Start Your Pitch Right Away

As soon as you can, bombard them with an avalanche of benefits. Talk until they interrupt you, and then jump in again. Spew as many as possible. You're bound to hit on a few they might be interested in. Nonsalespeople will ask questions first, and not talk much. How in the world do they expect to sell anything?

5. Have Your Objection Rebuttals Ready

Here's where you can really show off your sales skills. When you hear excuses like "Your price is too high," cut the prospects off at the knees with your slick answer. Paint them into a corner. Everyone knows buyers are liars. Non-salespeople instead rely on their questions again, thinking that if they get the person to talk, they'll find out the reason behind the objection. What a waste of time!

6. Close Three Times (at least) On Every Call

Read every book you can on closing techniques and stories. Anything that starts out with, "You know, this situation reminds me of something my immigrant grandfather told me about not taking advantage of great opportunities . . ." is especially good. Learn other dazzling closing techniques, especially those with names that sound like they'd fit in a "Terminator" movie. Oh, and be sure you close three times on every call, even if the person appears to be not interested. Wear them down.

(NOTE: Sometimes points have more impact when delivered with satire. Hopefully you had as much fun reading this as I did writing it. At what point did you realize my tongue was firmly planted in cheek? Bravo if it was within the first few sentences. On the other hand, anyone nodding his or her head in agreement all the way to the end needs to turn to page 1 and read this book again!)

YOUR ACTION STEPS

37 **Learning Sales Techniques from Ticket Scalpers**

I'm a sponge when it comes to observing sales strategies and techniques in all areas of life. This observation is from one of my other passions: sports.

Like a street merchant, I get a charge out of negotiating and buying tickets outside stadiums and arenas before games (you get the choicest tickets this way). I've attended World Series', Final Four games, both major league baseball and NBA All Star games, and countless other events by buying primo tickets at face value or less outside.

One of my secrets is to not buy from scalpers. But I do talk to them for two reasons: to gauge the market for that day's game, and to observe their sales techniques. We can learn a lot from

observing the techniques of these entrepreneurs—although their ethics are usually just slightly higher than transient home repair con artists who bilk the elderly.

Here's what I've learned from observing professional ticket scalpers.

1. **They're great qualifiers.** They always ask, up front, what you're looking to pay, and what type of seats you want.

"What do you want to spend?"

"Where do you want to sit?"

If I don't feel like dealing with them I'll answer that I plan on paying face value or less for box seats. They give me an "Are you crazy?" stare, shaking their heads as they move on to their next target, knowing better than to waste their ticking-away sales time with someone they obviously won't make a profit on.

2. **They help you experience the emotions in advance.**

"Here, look at where these seats are," as they stuff the ticket into your mitts.

"These seats are right behind the dugout. You'll have a great view!"

It's amazing how almost *every* seat these guys sell is "right behind the dugout" for unsuspecting victims. But I have a map of every

stadium, and quite often let them know that the seats are actually three-fourths of the way up the third deck in left field . . . seats Bob Uecker wouldn't even like. They say, "Oh, man, let me see those. Hmm, wonder how I got *these*?"

3. **They ask for the sale.** They have a short window of opportunity in which to make their money, therefore they waste no time asking for the business.

"Gimme \$40 for the pair."

"Do you want 'em or not?"

4. **They build urgency.** To help you make the decision now, they orchestrate emotional urgency.

"It's sold out, man. You won't find any better seats anywhere. And I'm gonna get rid of these quick. If you don't take 'em, someone will."

5. **They reinforce the sale.** They eliminate buyer's remorse before it occurs.

"You'll love those seats man. You got a great deal on those."

One time I was in a hurry and dealt with a scalper, but still negotiated him down to less than 50% of face value on the "Jack Nicholson" courtside seats at an L.A. Lakers game. He said, "You stole these from me man, I hate you for that." I felt smug,

even though I knew it was part of his act. He probably bought it for 75% of face value.

I'm not suggesting you use the same techniques as scalpers on your phone calls—just the strategy. Each of these five points is something we all should do on our calls. Go through each and think about what you do in each of those areas, and what you can do to improve.

(By the way, the secret to getting great tickets at a low price? Find the preferred parking area where season ticket holders/VIP's park, stand between there and the entrance, and hold up the number of fingers indicating how many tickets you need. Someone always has extras, and would prefer selling them to a reputable-looking person who will use them instead of scalping them at outrageous prices.)

YOUR ACTION STEPS

38 How to Deliver Real Value to Your Customers

Many of us service and manage customer accounts, calling on a regular basis, hopefully growing the business in the process. Questions I commonly hear from reps performing these functions are,

- “What do we do when we don’t have the cheapest price, and the competitors are coming in and lowballing us?”, and,
 - “What fresh things can I say when I call someone regularly?”
- The answer to both questions is the same: deliver value.

Before I continue, quick, answer this question without hesitating:

What value do **you** deliver to your customers?

Oh *reallllly*?

Are you *sure* that's of value to them? Or is it something that your product management and advertising people *think* is of value to customers? And did you have to ponder before answering?

To deliver maximum value on your calls, you must have a crystalclear grasp of what it means to your customers. Because, value is something they derive, not something you think you provide. I did a few training sessions focusing solely on value and here are ideas we discussed which might help you reevaluate the value you deliver.

- Buyers go and stay where they feel the quantity of value they get is greater than the dollars they expend.
- If you're not delivering value every time you speak with a customer, they might be wooed by someone whose offer *does* look inviting.
- Your customers are someone else's prospects. And *those* competitors are likely thinking of ways to deliver value.
- Value can't be engineered in to your products/services; it can only be extracted out by customers.
- Value is not your measurement of quality, service, or price. It's the customer's perception of the satisfaction he extracts.

- A customer might not perceive and realize the value he actually receives, therefore, in his mind, he's not getting it.
- No business exists simply to reduce its costs; all businesses exist to make money. Therefore, adding to a business' ability to make money outweighs the desire to cut costs.

How to Determine the Value You're Delivering to Customers

To help you determine how you can ensure you're delivering value, I suggest two group exercises for you.

1. First, stick as many people in a room as you can, (from all different departments) and ask the question,

“What value do customers get from us?”

Brainstorm.

And please, don't accept lame answers like, “We have good service.” What *is* good service, and how does that help your customer make money? You'll find the answers aren't as obvious as they initially seem, and it forces you stretch, looking at value from your customer's perspective.

2. For the second exercise break into groups of two or three sales reps, and compete to come up with “Value-Added Reasons

for Calling.” This would be the entire premise for your call. For example, you might call to let your customer know that based on his existing purchases he has qualified for your new lower pricing schedule. Perhaps you’re calling to let your customer know of a special on a few items he regularly buys anyway. Here’s the acid test as to whether or not a reason is acceptable:

“Would the customers say they were better off after that call than they were before it?”

If not, scrap it. You’re looking for reasons for calling that appeal to the items of value you came up with in the previous exercise. You should never call your customers and say, *“Just calling to see how it’s goin’.”* That doesn’t help them.

Bottom line, if you’re delivering value—from your customers’ perspective—every time you call, you’re much more than a sales rep. You’re a contributor to the growth of their business. It’s not easy, but it’s necessary to keep relationships alive.

Value, Or Nuisance?

I was madly scrambling, flinging files and books into my briefcase, hoping to sprint out the door and push the speed limit to the airport when this call arrived.

“Hello, I’m with (my cell phone company). I was just wondering how everything’s going?”

“How what’s going?”, I asked.

“Your service with us.”

“I use it, it works.”

“Oh, OK. Do you still have my number on file?”

“I don’t recall ever talking to you!”

“Well, I’m supposed to give you a call every two months. Let me giue you my phone number . . .”

Where’s the value there?

Analysis and Recommendation

Some people feel these regular “How’sitgoin?” calls are good customer service. I feel they’re a nuisance.

Think about it. If your customer is like most people, constantly in a hyper-busy mode, running faster but still getting farther behind every day, a call like this does nothing for the customer but waste time.

When your call is announced to the customer, you want him/her to say, “Oh, sure, put it through. Every time she calls, she always has something of interest for me.” Compare that to, “Oh, her again. Probably just calling to chit chat. Tell her I’m busy.”

If you do, and/or must call customers regularly, be certain you have something of value and interest every time. Be convinced that they’ll be better off after they’ve spoken with you.

Call with good news, information that will help them, ideas to help their business, details on a special you’ll be running, industry information they might not yet have heard about. Have a V.A.R (Value Added Point) on every call. Use those value-added reasons mentioned in the exercise suggested earlier.

Is it easy? No way. But if you can’t, I bet your competition can think of fresh things to say that just might be attractive enough to get them thinking—and considering moving their business.

YOUR ACTION STEPS

Teletips

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22 Top Teletips

In my newsletter and seminars, a popular feature is the teletips—brief, to-the-point, instantly usable ideas. Here are 22 of them for you to adapt and use.

1. Give the Entire Number

If you have one of those cute numbers that spell something, you might miss calls if you don't also list the *numerals* on your printed material. I know there are bigger crises in life to worry about, but I personally get frustrated when I have to squint at the keypad and decode which letters go with what numbers. But on a more objective note, a customer of mine from England faxed a note saying that he'd love to call our Telesales Tips

Line (402-896-TIPS, that's 402-896-8477), but the phones in the U.K don't have the alphabet on them.

2. They'll Buy Sometime, Be Sure It's From You

Writing in *"Sales and Marketing Management,"* Gil Cargill of the IDK Group cites a Dartnell survey stating that 80% of sales are made after the fifth contact, but that 90% of sales reps quit selling before then. (There's another statistic we should be able to calculate here that I think I've heard before . . . 10% of the sales reps make 80% of the sales?) He points out that in the past, reps were concerned about asking, *"What can I do to get you to buy right now?"* That doesn't work anymore. As I've also repeatedly stated, he suggests finding out,

"What can I say to be involved with you when you're ready to buy?"

He further suggests staying in touch with the prospect with letters and phone calls. Just be sure that when you do call or write you're delivering something of value, so their memory of you is positive—not of a salesperson looking to make a sale.

3. Be Sure Customers Are Satisfied

Dissatisfaction is the difference between customer expectations and results. The wider the gap, the greater the displeasure. It's your job to understand what results your customer expects,

and then ensuring you can deliver before you sell them. It's better to turn down a sale rather than have it degenerate into a costly nightmare later. You won't always have a fit with what someone needs. Letting them know, and even referring them elsewhere, still accomplishes what should be your ultimate objective: helping the prospect/customer get what they want and need. It shines a spotlight on your credibility, and these situations have an uncanny way of mysteriously reappearing . . . perhaps when the prospect *does have* something you can help them with. Don't leave it to chance though. Plant a seed. After referring them, say,

"Dan, keep in mind when your department does grow, and you do find yourself looking for a system that will handle the volume you'll likely encounter, I have something that would be appropriate at that time. So please keep my card on file. You know I'll take care of you."

4. Negotiating Ideas

Here are some useful negotiating tips written by Jack Kaine in "communication briefings."

- Label your communication. Meaning, preface your statement with what you plan to do. For example, **"Here's a very important point to consider: This machine . . ."**

- Ask questions to which you already know the answers. People typically share more information with someone who apparently knows less than they do.
- Avoid counterproposals. Instead, ask questions about their proposal. This way you can identify their proposal's shortcomings, and identify ways to solve them.

(SOURCE: "communication briefings")

5. Vintage Ideas

I had the opportunity to work with a great group of telephone professionals at Windsor Vineyards (Sonoma County, CA) who sell wine by phone. Here are just a few of the effective techniques I heard used.

"You will be absolutely delighted when you receive this wine..."

(Reinforces their decision to buy.)

"When you're serving this to your guests, you'll be thanking me ..." (Ditto.)

"This selection is like liquid velvet..." (What an image!)

"How much do you think you could use . . . just off the top of your head?" (A non-adversarial commitment question.)

6. How To Form a Warm Impression When Greeting Your Prospects

Listen carefully to how people answer their phone. If they simply say, “Hi, this is Larry,” responding with, *“Hello Mr. Jones, this is is too formal.* But if you don’t know them, don’t assume familiarity unless they’ve answered with their first name—it could put them on the defensive.

If your calls are screened and/or announced before they reach you, greet the caller enthusiastically by name. For example,

“Hello Paula, how can I help you?”

Remember, they’ve already given their name once. Acknowledge that, and you’ll start out on a more positive note.

7. First Name Only, Or First and Last?

A question I often get is, “Should you use your first and last names on calls, or is a first name sufficient?” Here are some general guidelines.

When prospecting, or calling people who won’t instantly recognize you, use both first and last names. This builds your credibility and professionalism, and eases any skepticism. Decision makers have told me when they get calls from people using only a first name—and they don’t know the caller—their image

is of people who typically use only first names, i.e. service repair people, delivery drivers, and so on.

Another benefit of using first and last name is that it eliminates the inevitable question, “And your last name is . . . ?”

On calls where there’s an existing relationship, last names aren’t necessary. You be the judge of how strong the familiarity is.

8. Persistence Pays—For Them

If you ever receive comments about your persistence, consider it a compliment. And be certain they realize that they are gaining as a result.

“You’re sure persistent, aren’t you?”

“I am. That’s because I believe so strongly in what I have, and how it will help you.”

9. When to Call?

Have a specified field set aside in your computer, or a consistent spot in your notes for “Best Times to Call.” If you call the same people on a routine basis, knowing when you have a better chance of reaching them can save you a lot of time—time you can reemploy making sales.

10. Hang It Up

There's a trend I've noticed over the years among the most successful sales reps: they have prompts hanging all around them. These are opening statements, specific questions, check lists, persuasive descriptive statements, and other time-tested phrases that get results. The reps don't use the visual aids as a crutch, but rather as an additional sales tool they can access when needed.

11. Are You Smart Enough to Get This?

Don't ask someone, "Do you *understand?*," or "Are you *following me?*"

These questions belittle the person, insulting his intelligence. Besides, the burden should always be on the questioner to make himself understood. Therefore, take the "you" out of it. Say,

"Did I explain that clearly enough?", or,

"Did I go into enough detail on that?"

12. Make an Impact on Conference Calls

If you have the opportunity to present to a group or committee on a conference call, ask your contact to provide you, in advance, the names, titles, and backgrounds of all those in attendance. Take it further and find out the likes, dislikes, and

potential questions or concerns of individuals in the group. Develop a fact sheet with relevant information for everyone before your call and ensure everyone has a copy. Address people by name. This all adds to an impressive, successful call.

13. Delay the Answer

Sometimes it's in your interest to delay answering a question until you have more information. Say,

“May I answer that later? I’ll need more information to give you the most accurate answer.”

Then ask them to write it down so you're sure to cover it later.

14. “Selling to the Top” Results in Top Sales

“Selling to the Top,” by David A. Peoples (John Wiley & Sons, New York), has given me—and reminded me of—some great pearls of wisdom. Here are a few excerpts.

- If there's not much difference between your product or service and that of your competitors, then there better be a big difference in the way you deal with people.
- If you think you're selling a commodity product, and you can't differentiate it, consider what Frank Perdue said: “If we can differentiate a dead chicken, you can differentiate anything.”

- You rarely—if ever—hear a person at the top of an organization say, “It’s not in the budget.” So where are you selling?
- When determining how high up the authority ladder your prospect is, ask,

“Will you be making a recommendation on this, or giving the Anal go ahead?”

Another great question is,

“Who can veto this project?”

15. Concentrate Less on Selling, and Objections are Minimized

There’s a clear correlation between the emphasis a sales rep places on “selling” or persuading a prospect, and the frequency and intensity of objections he/she hears. The more doggedly a rep tries to sell, the more he talks, and the less he questions and listens. Thus increasing the number of time the other person objects since her needs are not being addressed.

Instead, place the emphasis on getting information. The more you know about the other person, the better-equipped you are to make a recommendation targeted with surgical precision. And sales are the result, with even less effort!

16. Sign Your Messages

Sign your name to the messages you take for others in your department, and encourage anyone who takes messages for you to do likewise. If you've ever wondered if Pat Smith was male or female, or if the phone number looks like a "3" but could be an "8," you know how useful this can be.

17. Record Your letter

I always talk about the importance of listening to tapes of your cedis in order to improve. Consider, also, listening to your letters. That's right, after writing a letter, read it into a tape recorder. You'll look at it more objectively, and more readily spot awkward phrases.

("The Perfect Letter," by Patricia Westheimer and Robert Nelson)

18. You Might Win the Argument But . . .

Ben Franklin said, "A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." Sure, you can likely develop a vigorous, logical argument for why a person shouldn't be concerned about price, or whatever other objection you might commonly hear. But unless it addresses their concern, it won't win them over. Get them to air out their feelings. Encourage them to talk about why they feel the way they do.

“Let’s talk about that. To what are you comparing our price?”

Or,

“What criteria are you using when evaluating the value compared to the price?”

And that’s only the start. Continue with the questioning. Only **then** are you able to address what’s really on their mind.

19. You’ll Never Know Unless You Ask

Never underestimate the amount and quality of information that screeners and receptionists might be able to provide you. Participants at a recent seminar shared stories of how they routinely get direct extension numbers of high level executives, and even have the organizational chart read to them! But you must ask for the information.

20. Have Them Figure the Numbers

People are more likely to believe their ideas over yours. They can easily refute your data; theirs they’ll stand behind. So, let them figure up the numbers. Ask them,

“Do you have a calculator there? Let’s go through some figures.”

Or, ask them to write down numbers. When you identify a need or a problem, have them quantify it in terms of how many, how much, how often. Then you have potent data you can use later.

21. Get Ready for The Next Call

Your calls are your own personal laboratory. Test out new ideas and techniques. Just like the handyman in a workshop, tinker, revamp, test out new tools. It's motivating, and can yield profitable breakthroughs.

22. On Calling Customers

When phoning past purchasers, sales reps in all industries like to talk about accounts, as in "... *and I was reviewing your account.*" Kevin McGann with Video Arts in Chicago pointed out that referring to a customer as an "account" is a cold, impersonal way to speak with the customer.

Instead, say things like,

"We provided you with..."

"You used our..." and,

"We were able to help you with..."

YOUR ACTION STEPS

And Finally . . .

Congratulations! You've reached the end of the book . . . which is the beginning of your real work. Sounds kind of like a corny college commencement address, but it's true. As I've mentioned so many times throughout this book, it's up to you to put these ideas into action. And I'm confident you've got what it takes to do just that and enjoy the harvest of your labors.

For many of you, you've been with me for years, which I am eternally grateful and hope you continue. For those who are seeing my work for the first time, I'm hopeful that this isn't the last we hear from each other. Instead, let this be the transition point to the next step in our relationship. You see, I haven't just revised this book to add to my trophy case. My objective with this book is providing another tool to help you, and hundreds of thousands like you, get more business using the phone. If I've accomplished this with you, you'll want to take advantage of the many other resources I have—and will continue creating—to speed you along the trail to riches.

I'm plugged in daily to what you do, regularly scrutinizing, developing, testing, teaching, and measuring ways to say the right words at the right time in the right way in order to reach agreement by phone. Each month I typically take on two major training assignments, literally doing a cavity examination of a company's sales process in order to help make it better. Too, every month I sit at this keyboard, assembling my eight-page *"Smart Calling Report"* sales tips newsletter, reporting on the best ideas I've seen that month. This is an ongoing mission for me, and I invite you to stay in touch in order to swell your own coffers by utilizing the results of my nonstop research. Please go to <http://BusinessByPhone.com/shop> to check out the many resources to help you sell more.

Please do contact me with your success stories . . . how you've used the ideas in this book—or ideas and methods you developed and refined on your own—to close that big deal. I'd love to tell others worldwide about your triumphs.

Contact me also with your questions and problems. In my weekly email sales tips I often analyze a call or sales situation and I invite you to call, write, email, message, or fax me with yours. If you feel you need something more than what you read here, I'll be happy to discuss your situation to determine how we might work together on a training program for your organization, or a workshop or seminar for your national sales meeting or association convention. (If you anticipate an imminent

need, please call at least 45 months early as my commitments fill up quickly.)

I've enjoyed spending time with you, I thank you for your investment, and I offer you best wishes and continued success!

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Look at What Users of This Book Say About Their Results

"Immediately after getting this book in my hands and reading it, I had my biggest month in sales, and opened new accounts with a new product. Thanks!"

~Daniel Stein, Minneapolis, MN

"Your book is comprehensive, practical, and real world; easy to read with clear examples. In just the first month, our outbound telesales reps achieved a 9% increase (in dollars) in their average first order sale using the tips and techniques in your book. "

~Steve Mendlin, Office Depot

"Your book contains more usable common sense ideas than ANY sales book I've EVER read. My personal sales have increase over 25% as a direct result of using techniques in your book. It really is that good!"

~Don Coultas, Bradenton, FL

"HOW TO SELL MORE . . . is chock full of tips, ideas, techniques, and methods that have improved my selling skills, and increased my sales dramatically. Your practical ideas have saved me YEARS of trial and error."

~Loretta Wiltse, TCI

"Something so simple as the "Opening Statement" segment of your book has given me many, many, many more presentations than ever before! I have books upon books on sales, but none compare. Why? Because your common sense approach works!"

~Jeff Carsania, Lake Worth, FL

"I have been in telephone sales management for over 10 years, and have read a lot from other pros. But your book is the BEST. I sure look forward to Volume 2/ "

~Don Woody, Control-O-Fax

"Great balance of "To Do's " and "Not to Do's " for successful sales using the phone. We 're putting the ideas into practice, and they work! What's the discount for 20 more copies?"

~Tom Babb, Tires International

"The book is great! Required reading in our telesales department. It has turned into our 'play book', a true 'X's and O's' of telesales!"

~Mike Sedlak, Cleveland Cavaliers NBA Basketball Team

"Volume I is a goldmine of selling tips. My salesmen are already using the techniques and we're seeing immediate results in more returned calls and larger orders. I especially like the format: each idea its own little chapter. Just enough to chew on one at a time without being overwhelmed. Looking forward to Volume 2."

~Scott Matthew, Talking House

"Many other sales books give you plenty of theory, but you actually play out sales call examples, stating word-for-word ideas, which I find very effective."

~Henry DiGregorio, Atlantek

"... gave me new ideas I had never thought of and they work! Also reminded me of techniques I used at one time, but somehow forgotten. Great book"

~David D. Doerscher, Sweet Computer Services