#### Art Sobczak's

# SMART CALLING REPORT

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# Avoid Sounding Desperate. Use the "Something Special" Close

#### By James Muir

If you are involved in sales in any way then I'm sure you are familiar with the pressures associated with reaching end-of-quarter or perhaps even end-of-month quotas. It is unfortunate that these pressures often give rise to many dysfunctional selling practices. One common tactic is to offer a concession of some kind in order to close the sale before the end of the month or quarter.

End-of-quarter discounts are essentially trading margin for timing. I am not an advocate of discounting in an attempt to accelerate timing. However, having worked for a publicly traded company for almost two decades, I do understand the dynamics involved. In some cases revenue recognized in this quarter may actually be more valuable to the company than that same revenue the following quarter.

So as you can imagine, I have a long history of executive management encouraging accelerated sales every quarter, often times by whatever means possible.

#### The Birth of an Ingenious Trial Close

I recall a particular quarter where I had on my office whiteboard exactly ten opportunities for new business that were all in play. One of these opportunities was ripe and ready to go but the others were somewhere in the middle of their buying process. Two weeks before the end of the quarter we received the word from above — this was a particularly challenging quarter, and we needed to use all legal means possible to bring in more business.

I was encouraged to offer discounts, which I did, to all ten accounts as an inducement to close before month's end. Each account knew that the discount was conditional upon receiving agreements before end of quarter and that they would not receive that discount if it came in later.

So how did it work? One deal signed — the very deal that was already at the closing stage before we had decided to start offering discounts.

The remaining nine accounts chose to continue their evaluation rather than take advantage of the discounts. Naturally we continued working these into the subsequent quarter, and ultimately we closed seven more of the original ten for a total of eight out of ten.

#### **That Awkward Moment**

Unfortunately, on every opportunity there was this awkward conversation about whether or not they could get the same discount they saw the previous quarter: "If it was worth it to you before, why isn't it worth it to you now?" they would ask. Resisting the request would sometimes create a tangible erosion of goodwill. Anyone else recognize this situation?

Ironically, near the end of the very next quarter I found myself in a repeat fire drill of the previous quarter where discounts were encouraged to close business. Naturally I used this opportunity to provide the discounts I had before and all ended well though with lower margins. And thus I found myself having unintentionally trained my buyers to wait until the end of the quarter in order to get concessions, but that's another story for another day.

#### Epiphany

It was this dynamic that caused me to think creatively about how to

offer concessions. There must be a way, I thought, to see if a deal can really close by end of quarter without telegraphing the concession and having to give that concession later even if they couldn't close by EOQ.

And thus "Something Special" was born.

#### The "Something Special" Trial Close

Many professionals have told me that this one close is among the most valuable things they've ever learned in sales. You be the judge. Here it is verbatim:

"Does it make sense for me to see if we can do something special for you if we can get everything wrapped up by the end of the quarter?"

"Does it make sense for me to see if we can do something special for you if we can get everything wrapped up by the end of the quarter?"

Naturally you adapt the time frame to suit your situation. Otherwise I recommend you use it verbatim.

#### Attitude

It's important that we come to the conversation without any particular concession in mind here. Determining exactly what the client deems as "special" will require another step and further conversation. Your attitude should be: "Well, I don't know what my options are without talking to some folks, but if the timing is right I'll go see what I can do for us."

The beauty of this approach is if the timing isn't right for the client, you will never have to discuss what that "something special" might have been, and

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#### The "Art" of Selling

# Sales Observations

We're over a month into the baseball season, and finally most cities have thawed out, thankfully. I'm a baseball geek, and follow it a lot more than even an avid fan.

An article I came across in the *Wall* Street Journal discussed the Chicago Cubs, and their persuasion and sales methods when attracting free agent players. It truly is a Smart Calling approach applied to baseball.

The article shared the story of how this past off-season, free agent player Tyler Chatwood met with the Cubs to hear their pitch. He was expecting them to brag about their recent successes on the field, winning the World Series in 2016, their plans for him as a pitcher, and the obscene money they would offer him.

Instead, Cubs' top executives Theo Epstein and Jed Hoyer recommended the best hospitals and doctors in the area for his pregnant wife.

Chatwood was blown away! They had never met him or his wife.

He signed a three-year contract with the Cubs.

Appealing to what is most important to players as humans—their families—has become the Cubs' secret weapon in "practically hand-selecting talent."

#### SMART CALLING REPORT

(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc., and is a member benefit of the Smart Calling Online membership program. To join, go to www.SmartCallingOnline.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/ Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnists: Jim Domanski, Jill Konrath, Craig Elias. Subscriptions: ©Copyright 2018 Business By Phone Inc. All rights reserved. Photocopying of this publication without permission is breaking the law. Please inquire for permission. (480)699-0958. Reprinting of articles in your publication is permitted as long as we're credited with address and phone number and a copy is sent to us. As part of their strategy, the article says, the Cubs push harder for an inperson meeting just to get to know the player. They say it "enables them to get a sense of what's important to him, and get a sense of who he is."

Regardless of what you sell, humans ultimately make the decision to buy. Understand what is important to them, what they value the most, and you will be way ahead of the pack.

**Long-time reader and fan, Kenny** Madden, Customer Success Manager at DiscoverOrg, shared on LinkedIn how he had read four articles all about opening calls. He said that they all suggested starting with "Hi this is (first name, last name) from X company. The reason for my call is\_\_\_\_. How have you been/how are you?"

He said that several years ago he flipped that around and the results were dramatic.

The alternative approach he tested:

"David, thanks for picking up. The article about driving 2,000 units of the X z series server in Channel Solutions Magazine (insert something so specific to the person that is 100% relevant to them) was really interesting."

David: "Well thank you. Who are you?"

Kenny added, "We are then off to the races mate."

He said it works for net new business/sales development, account executive, and customer success situations.

Good job Kenny... on calls from people we don't know, the unspoken question that we need answered is, "What is this about and is there some potential value here that warrants staying on the phone with this person?" Mentioning something about them is a pattern-interrupt that shows you are different from the typical cold callers who are robotically placing calls to just put up numbers, and it triggers the notion that there might be something in it for them. And, quantity and quality (where some research is done) are not mutually exclusive.

**If you haven't gotten in yet**, I'm seeing you in the new, private, exclusive Smart Calling Facebook group!

We've been up for a a couple of weeks now and really are getting some valuable and fun interaction.

The success of any community like this is largely dependent upon the participation of its members, so I encourage you to visit regularly and participate.

I'm participating every day, as well as adding new training, tips, and inspiration regularly.

It's really great to roll up our sleeves and interact with other likeminded, motivated sales pros.

So far we've worked on opening statements, answers to resistance and objections, how to handle call reluctance and rejection, and I've posted recordings of calls I've received.

To join, free, just go to Facebook.com/groups/SmartCalling/

See you there, and make it your best month ever!

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at ArtS@BusinessByPhone.com.

# **Best Questions to Ask Inbound Leads**

#### By Craig Elias

In my previous article, I promised to reveal the three best questions to ask an inbound lead.

Ask the wrong questions and you'll either miss hot prospects or spend a ton of effort on those who don't buy from you.

Ask the right questions, and you'll quickly tell hot a prospect from a time waster.

There are a lot of people who say that you shouldn't call someone who completes a form on your website because they're not ready to buy. They recommend peppering them with more and more and more content, hoping they'll call you when they're ready. But as Guy Kawasaki is fond of saying "Hope is not a strategy!"

Now, I agree that just because someone fills in a form on your website, it doesn't mean they are ready to buy.

But research by the ITSMA says 70% of decision-makers want to talk to salespeople during the early stages of their buying process, and the Rain Group's research says that 71% of buyers want to talk to sellers when they're looking for new ideas.

So the next time someone completes a form on your website, don't wait, PICK UP THE FREAKIN' PHONE!

The MIT Lead Response Study showed only .6% of companies responded in less than five minutes and less than 25% of companies that receive a web lead pick up the phone.

The big questions are: when is the best time to call, and what are the best questions to ask?

### When Is The Best Time To Phone?

The MIT response study also showed that when you follow up on an inbound in five minutes or less, you're over ten times more likely to reach the person who completed the form than if you waited just 30 minutes and research by InsideSales.com shows that 50% of the time buyers choose the vendor who responds first!

Many sales experts, including myself, are firm in their belief that the more relevant a call or email, the more likely the prospect will engage with a salesperson. But how can you research a prospect to make your call relevant when you have to call them in less than five minutes?

#### You don't!

Because they've demonstrated their interest in a certain resource, I would argue that you already know enough to make an initial call.

Once you get an understanding of what buying stage the prospect is in – and how you should engage with them going forward – then you can perform the necessary research.

Here's a simple way to remember this:

Inbound leads – salespeople should act, then learn, then act

Outbound leads – salespeople should learn, then act, then learn some more

Every minute that ticks by after you receive an inbound lead reduces your chance of earning a new customer.

So don't wait, pick up the phone.

Those with cat-like phone reflexes are most likely win in the end.

### What Are The Best Questions To Ask?

When you pick up the phone start by saying something like,

#### "I'm following up on your information request. Can I take two minutes of your time and ask three really quick questions?"

In all the years that I've used this method the answer has always been "yes."

Then, launch into the following three questions:

#### 1) "Did you get the email with the link to the resources you're looking for?"

Before anything else, you want to make sure they got what they were looking for.

If they misspelt their email address, you can resend the information to the correct address.

If it ended up in their spam folder, you can tell them how to get it out or route it to them via another channel.

Follow through on this initial interaction between your company and the prospect to demonstrate your reliability.

Now you want to understand what are they working on so you need to ask question number 2.

#### 2) "When you read about this or saw this, what resonated and made you say, 'Hey I should check this out'?"

I typically include the question, "How did you hear about us?" in my forms, so I don't need to ask this question during my follow up. Instead, I pose this second question to uncover the specific words, images, or themes that captured their attention and compelled the prospect to click.

This information is relevant to both Marketing and Sales. Part of a salesperson's responsibility is to help their colleagues in Marketing understand what's working and what's not, and this type of feedback goes a long way towards that goal.

In addition, learning what words grab a buyers' attention helps salespeople tailor their emails and communication for maximum engagement and response.

Once you understand what captured their attention you want to ask a question that will tell you if they are potentially a hot prospect or not.

That's when I ask the most important of the three questions.

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# **Ask These Eight Great Questions (Part 2)**

Last month we reviewed the first four questions that sales reps should regularly use for prospecting and account development. Here are the final four questions that should be part of your selling arsenal.

#### 5. The 'Explain' Question

Here is a 'catch all' question that can be used in a variety of scenarios.

The 'explain' question is less a question and more of a directive. It is extremely effective because it gets your client to open up, expand, pontificate, ruminate, elaborate and articulate. For instance, suppose the prospect says that your price is too high. Your reply?

#### "John, could you 'explain' to me what you mean by too high?"

It's a great question because you're asking for elaboration. Is the price too high relative to budget or relative to a competitive bid? Or is it a smokescreen hiding something else? Regardless, the client must open up.

Suppose your client says "We're not all that happy with flux modula-tors."

Your reply:

#### "Lindsey, could you explain to me why you're not happy?"

Your objective is to get the prospect to elaborate on the depth and breadth of their unhappiness. The bigger it is the greater the motivation to fix it.

Suppose the prospect says, "Well, I'd have to go to committee with that proposal."

Your reply:

"I understand completely. Bailey can you please explain to me how the committee operates and how they go about evaluating a proposal?" The answer gives you a better understanding of what you must do next and/or who you should really be approaching.

The explain question is one of the BEST questions you'll ever use ... so use it often.

#### 6. The 'Make Sense' Question

This a 'trial close' question and you'll want to keep it handy because you'll use it a lot.

Use it during and after you present your offer or after you've tackled an objection. So, for example, suppose you have presented a financial planning strategy to a prospect. Just ask,

#### "Lori, does that make sense to you so far?"

#### "David, am I making sense to you right now?"

This question does a couple of things. First of all, it tosses the conversation back into your prospect's lap. This creates a 'give and take' dialog and forces you to relinquish control of the call. This is s a good thing because it stops you from rambling on.

Secondly, it helps you gauge if the client is on board or not. To make this happen you've got to listen to both the words and the tone of your client. If your prospect says, "Ya sure ... I guess" but with a vague and uncertain tone, clearly it does not make sense.

You need to stop right there and reverse gears by saying,

"It sounds like I may have confused things a bit . Can you explain to me what you're thinking?" (Notice the versatile "explain" question) On the other hand, if the client gives you a positive and enthusiastic remark, "Ya, it makes total sense" they have, in effect, given you a buying signal which says, "Go on, I like what I hear."

Don't be afraid to liberally pepper your sales call with "make sense" type of questions.

Variations include,

"Do you follow?"

"How does that sound to you?"

And, "**Am I on the right track?**"

#### 7. The 'Removal' Question

Here's a question that every rep should keep in their hip pocket and use when dealing with objections. As the name implies, the Removal Question 'removes' the issue at hand and asks the client their thoughts based on that scenario.

Suppose a prospect says, "It's really great but it's just not in our budget."

Your reply:

#### "Fair enough, Mark. Let me ask, if budget was not an issue, would you proceed with the proposal as outlined."

If Mark says yes, then you can negotiate or come up with terms or arrange financing (or do whatever) because the objection is not a smokescreen but rather the real thing.

If he says, "Well, ya. . .but I am also a little concerned about maintenance program" you've discovered that it's not a budgetary issue or that budget is only part of

#### (continued on next page)

#### Jim Domanski

#### (continued from page 2)6. The

another issue. In short, you have two objections that need addressing.

#### 8. The 'Try' Question

One of THE ABSOLUTE best questions to help close a sale is the 'try' question. For instance,

#### "Tracie, would you like to give our program a try?"

### "So David, why not give it a try?"

This questions come from Jeffrey Fox, author of "How to Become a Rainmaker." He calls it a "killer sales question" and he's right.

Why?

Because, as Fox explains, to most people 'try' is a revocable act and a decision that can be reversed. It sounds and feels temporary or impermanent.

Fox concludes that people feel that to try something is a sample or a test, not a commitment to buy. But in reality, they either buy or they don't buy. There is no "try" buy. But, psychologically the prospect has an easier time making the decision to say yes to the purchase because it reduces perceived risk.

#### Summary

Good questions get you good answers. The better the information you get, the easier it is to sell. Implement these eight questions into your daily routine. Peel back the onion, get down to the core issues ... and sell more.

(Jim Domanski is President of TeleConcepts Consulting, a telesales consulting and training firm.



Contact him at Jim @TeleConceptsConsulting.com,

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### An Opening Statement Review for Calling Inactive Accounts

**Openings** 

Dave Tegmeyer is the Sales Manager with a training client, Indy Imaging. They provide large format printing on signs and banners for sign shops that do not have the equipment to do it themselves in house.

Here is an opening he wanted help with:

Dave said, "I'm looking for your feedback on this opening statement for calling an inactive account."

## Opening Statement for an Inactive Account

Hi \_\_\_\_\_, I'm with Indy Imaging \_\_\_\_, we printed some \_\_\_\_\_for you .....thank you for that business..... Since then.....we've added several new products that many of our customers are selling to increase their profits...If I've caught you at a good time, I'd like to show you a couple of those products on our website ....Are you in front of your computer?"

#### **Art's Review**

Regarding the opening... pretty good. The only change would be to

"We've added several new products that are selling really well for many of our customers with (shops, etc.) similar to you. If I've caught you at a good time.....I'd like to ask a couple of questions to see if you'd like a look at what these are."

The first change was to paint more of a picture with them in it (selling well for shops like theirs). Then, instead of asking them for a big decision (getting in front of the computer), let's build up to it with a micro decision (answering questions) before they can see what they are. (continued from page 2)

3) "I'm curious. What happened recently that made this content more relevant or more important?"

This question not only uncovers the trigger event that drove your customer to your content but also reveals what buying stage they're in (for more information on buying stages, check out this post). And once you know their buying stage, you also know how to proceed:

**Status Quo**: Nurture. Put this prospect in a lead nurturing program and find ways to add value until they experience an event triggered by dissatisfaction and pushed the prospect into the Window of Dissatisfaction<sup>TM</sup>.

**Searching for Alternatives:** Ignore. This lead has already chosen their preferred vendor and is now just getting three prices so they can justify their choice to others.

**The Window of Dissatisfaction**: Sell! This is a hot prospect. Now is the time to use the 7 Second Sale and reel them in!

Sometimes the hardest part of selling is knowing when is the best time to reach out to inbound prospects again.

I'll cover that issue next month on the Three Best Times to Follow Up With an Inbound Lead.

**P.S.** With your inbound leads who are already searching for alternatives, the only strategy I've seen effectively work here is to be the least risky choice alternative and keep calling back to see if their preferred choice has let them down. Once they've been let down, they become even more risk-averse, and since you've positioned yourself as the least risky alternative, you become their new preferred vendor.



(Craig Elias is the Creator of "Trigger Event Selling" and author of the award winning sales book "SHiFT!" You can reach Craig at

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# Think Negatively to Keep Your Best Customers

When Todd called me, he was worried. His company was growing. Over the past few years, they'd steadily acquired their toughest competitors.

They were now the dominant player in a fragmented market, setting the benchmark against which all other vendors are compared.

So what could possibly be going wrong? It turns out, a lot!

Recently they'd lost several big contracts to small firms who couldn't possibly offer the breadth and depth of services that their customers wanted. This had to stop! In many ways, these losses were inconceivable! Their salespeople had deep relationships that went back for 20+ years. Plus they consistently received superior customer service ratings.

In short, there was no reason to assume their business with these accounts was in serious jeopardy—until they heard the bad news.

#### It Was Too Late

But by then it was too late; contracts had already been signed. Suddenly they were on the outside looking in.

Even their "friends" in the account were stunned—especially since they'd recommended renewing the original agreement.

Yet when I heard the story, I wasn't surprised.

Long-term relationships can breed complacency and when that happens, it's only a matter of time before you get the wake-up call.

In this case, the winning seller realized that she couldn't beat the entrenched incumbent in a head-to-head confrontation.

So she changed the game.

Prior to launching her new strategy, regional offices had the power to make their own decisions. Instead of trying to convert one office at a time, she took the decision up one level and out of the hands of the traditional buyers.

Then she showed her new contact why different criteria were needed to evaluate the various service providers.

Of course, she inserted some criteria that played to her strength and changed the focus of the discussion. It worked. She won the contract.

#### It Was Too Late

It was time for some serious negative thinking.

The only way to prevent things like that from happening is to think negatively.

Seriously. Think really negatively. Dark, black thoughts anything that could possibly go wrong.

Paranoia is good for customer retention and growth. You must assume they're out to get you at every turn. (They are, you know.)

This requires serious contingency planning. Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to step into your competitors' shoes and plan an assault on your own customer base.

The first step is to do a situation analysis. Identify your strengths and weaknesses. Assess yourself against competitors. Be painfully honest.

While the truth may hurt, losing your bread-and-butter customers hurts much worse.

You need to get sly—like a fox.

Think about how you'd steal the account away. Ask questions like:

What seeds of doubt could you plant about your company?

How could you highlight your weaknesses? How could you change the game so you wouldn't have to compete head on?

What could you do to sneak in under your radar screen?

Who else might you get involved in the decision?

Doing this in a group is even more fun. The collective intelligence of a paranoid sales team uncovers far more weaknesses than one person could find on his/her own.

Once you have a clear picture of your vulnerabilities, develop a plan to do something about them before you lose the account.

If you believe those positive thinking pundits all the times, you'll be thinking happy thoughts but losing customers. That's crazy.

Embrace the power of negative thinking.

You'll be much happier in the long run. The advice of Napolean Hill, author of Think and Grow Rich, sums it all up: "The majority of men meet with failure because of their lack of persistence in creating new plans to take the place of those which fail."

P.S. While this article focuses on protecting your customer base, you can also emulate the winning seller's strategy of getting into big accounts by going under the radar screen of the incumbent providers. Two lessons in just one article—amazing!

(Jill Konrath, author of SNAP Selling, Selling to Big Companies, and her newest book, Agile Selling, helps sellers land bigger clients and



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speed up their sales cycle. To get her free Prospecting Tool Kit, visit www.jillkonrath.com/sales-resources.)

### "Something Special" Close"

### (Continued from page 1)

your margins are preserved going into the next period.

If the buyer says that it "IS possible to wrap things up" within your timeframe, then you have a couple of options:

Ask what they would find most valuable. Not guaranteeing anything until you first talk with others inside your organization.

Tell them you will go see what you can do and that you will report back. Then go discuss your options with your organization or supervisor.

These two options are not mutually exclusive. I prefer to use them both. The only time you would want to skip option one is if it is possible that the client will suggest concession options that you know you won't be able to satisfy. In that case, asking will only set an expectation that you can't meet.

#### Concessions

While concessions vary by industry, some common ones involve delivery, training details, additional services, optional modules, maintenance, payment options, and the list goes on. I have often found that my client's preference for a concession was not what I was expecting. Based on the dynamics within a given organization, clients often value concessions on services more than a discount on the basic price. Knowing this gives you much more flexibility in crafting your offer, and if a client values something that has a lower hard cost to your company, it's a real win-win.

Here are some examples of how your conversation might go:

PROFESSIONAL 1: "Gary, does it make sense for me to see if we can do something special for you if we can get everything wrapped up by the end of the quarter?"

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: "I don't think so. Our CEO is out until after the holidays. We wouldn't be able to do any-thing until he's back."

PROFESSIONAL 2: "Hey Gary, does it make sense for me to see if we can do something special for you

#### if we can get everything wrapped up by the end of the quarter?"

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: "Maybe. What did you have in mind?"

#### PROFESSIONAL 2 : "Well, I don't know what my options are without talking to some folks, but if the timing is right I'll go see what I can do for us."

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: "If the offer is right I think we can do something. Go find out what you can do."

PROFESSIONAL 3: "Hey Gary, does it make sense for me to see if we can do something special for you if we can get everything wrapped up by the end of the quarter?"

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: "Hmmm, what are you thinking?"

PROFESSIONAL 3: "Well, I don't know what my options are without talking to our CEO, but if we can actually do something this quarter, he said he would be willing to work with clients."

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: "If the offer's good enough we're ready to do something. Why don't you find out what he's thinking?"

PROFESSIONAL 3: "You got it. Just to speed the process up a bit; is there any part of the proposal that you would get more value out of than another? I'll see if that's an area we can play in for us."

PROSPECTIVE CLIENT: "There is. Charitie is concerned that some of our folks will need more training than usual, so anything you could do in that area will make me hero with her. From my perspective, it would be great if there was something you could do with the maintenance. Lowering it or starting it later would be great. So that's it, maintenance and training. See if there is something he can do there. Thanks."

#### Three Important Outcomes

Something Special accomplishes three important things:

It doesn't telegraph any kind of concession or the size of that concession.

It reveals if the client is able to do something within your suggested time frame.

It positions you as an advocate for the client. You are doing all this on their behalf. It positions you as an advocate for the client.

(James Muir is a best-selling author, professional sales trainer, speaker and



coach. The Perfect Close: The Secret to Closing Sales that shows sales and service professionals a clear and simple approach to increase closed opportunities and accelerate sales to the highest levels while remaining genuinely authentic.

If you are interested in learning a method of closing that is zero pressure, involves just two questions and is successful 95% of the time go to PureMuir.com.)

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### **Don't Think Out Loud**

Think, but don't do it out loud. When you're searching for what to say, don't think aloud. Be sure your comments add to the conversation. Otherwise you might utter some random thoughts you could regret later.

What prompted this was a sales rep I was in the process of negotiating with. I asked for something to be thrown in to sweeten the offer, and then he began talking to no one in particular in a stage voice: "...well let's see, I did give some things to the Blake client, and we did throw in an additional three months for someone else..." I then interrupted his conversation with himself and said, "Yeah, those twothings would be good."

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### TeleTips

#### Get That Thing Out of Your Mouth

Try to eliminate using the word "thing" on your calls. Listen to your recordings. Notice if and how you might use it. Develop more descriptive terms to help listeners visualize your description. Instead of, "It's a thing that helps you to ...," say, **"It's a pencil-sized tool that helps you to ...**"

#### Instead of Interrupting, Stop Breathing. Really

If you have a tendency to interrupt, hold your breath for two or three seconds before speaking. This ensures they are done, and gives you an opportunity to think of your next statement or question.

#### Answering Questions From Screeners

Here's a technique that everyone might not be comfortable with, wouldn't be appropriate for all industries, and needs to be delivered in the correct tone, otherwise it could come across as adversarial. When a prying screener wants to know why you're calling, Lance Vogel suggests saying, **"It's about some sensitive information. Are you able to discuss that?"** This actually qualifies the screener as well, since she/he might be part of the decision making process.

Personally I suggest giving a version of your opening statement when the screener asks what the call is about. Do not talk about products or services, but instead, results.

#### Do the Math for Them

Stephen Hattabaugh suggests that when customers offer a number that represents dollars or amount of time they're losing, wasting, or missing on a monthly basis, multiply that figure for them to point out the actual yearly total.

For example,

**Prospect:** "I'd say those workplace injuries probably cost us 20 hours worth of downtime per month."

Caller: "Wow. So what you're saying is that on a yearly basis you're down 240 hours because of injuries."

#### Listen for Tone On Voice Mail

Craig Clennan suggested that when you reach voice mail, pay particular attention to the decision maker's personality on their greeting. This gives you some insight into the type of person they are and how you might approach them. Also, listen carefully to how they pronounce their name. This small point could help you avoid an embarassing mistake.

#### **Get Info First**

We often preach about the value of collecting information prior to speaking with a decision maker. The more you know about the company, decision maker, and buying process, the more finely-tuned your opening, questions, and overall call will be.

Joe Adams likes to ask questions of receptionists and switchboard operators at the car dealerships he calls into to sell his satellite-based broadcast training for dealers:

#### "How does change happen there at the dealership?"

### "When you implement something new there, who normally takes the ball and runs with it?"

Joe further added that quite often sales reps get fixated on certain titles within organizations, and feel that's the person they need to sell to. Joe said that titles aren't as important as the decision making process within an organization. For example, his key contact could be a Financial Manager in one organization, in another it could be the Office Manager, or, perhaps the owner himself.

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