Art Sobczak's

# SMART CALLING REPORT

January 2019 Volume 36 Number 1

# Seven Objection-Handling Tips

*By Chris Orlob*

Objection handling tips are all over the Internet.

What makes this (*one* of) the BEST posts on objection handling you'll read this year?

It's the only one that involves *hard data.*

We studied 67,149 sales meetings from our database of three million recorded calls.

The team analyzed them with AI (artification intelligence) to identify what that correlates with success, based on data.

Dozens of things stood out, including how successful salespeople respond to objections.

## STEP ONE: Pause, Speak with Calm Authority

Successful reps *pause* after objections.

In fact, they *pause longer* after an objection than during other parts of a sales call.

**It's as if objections trigger them into slow motion.**

By contrast, unsuccessful reps often *interrupt* the customer upon receiving an objection. They *pounce* on objections, getting "all riled up."

They also speak *faster* after hearing an objection. It's as if objections make them nervous.

**Consider this:** In a typical sales conversation, average talking speed is 173 words per minute.

But when flustered by an objection, a bad sales rep will speed up to 188 words per minute.

Top producers slow it down.

If you maintain a calm demeanor amid a flurry of objections, you'll build trust with your customer.

The rest of the steps won't matter if you can't do that.

## STEP TWO: Clarify With Questions

According to the data, successful salespeople respond to objections with a question.

Objection scenarios are *rife* with potential misunderstandings.

If you don't clarify them, you might address *the wrong issue.* Doing so creates friction.

Now, here's what *low performers* do instead: they react with a knee-jerk monologue.

The customer voices a valid concern, and the sales rep spends the next minute *steam rolling*.

Not only do they often address the WRONG issue, but talking for long streaks *reeks* of insecurity.

What question should you ask to clarify objections?

The first one is called mirroring. This tactic is from Chris Voss in his book *Never Split the Difference.*

Here's how it works: Repeat the last few words of your buyer's sentence. And do it with an upward voice tone (like you're asking a question). It triggers your buyer to elaborate.

Say these phrases, ending with an upward tone, like a question:

**"The price is too high?"**

**"Your boss said no?"**

**"The timing is not right?"**

The key is to PAUSE and let your buyer further explain.

Now here's a warning. Ignore at your own peril.

Don't ask "why?" when clarifying objections.

"Why" doesn't clarify. It's a threatening question that questions the validity of the buyer's objection. It puts your buyer on the defensive.

That leads us to the second type of question you can use to clarify objections.

**"Can you help me understand what's causing that concern?"**

Notice this question asks "why" without uttering the word "why."

To sum up, overcoming an objection is like peeling an onion. The core of the onion is what you want to address.

You have to peel back the outer, surface-level layers.

## STEP THREE: Validate the Objection

Alrighty! You've played your patience card, bit your tongue, and asked a question (or two).

GREAT! Your next job is to *validate* the objection.

I'm going to let you in on a secret... humans go through 95% of their lives feeling misunderstood.

If you are the person who understands them, you'll carry powerful influence.

Giving your buyer the "gift" of feeling understood is *so important*, that the Solution Selling method dedicates

***(continued on page 7)***

# Sales Observations

**Woody Allen was wrong. As it** relates to sales, anyway.

A quote that is popularly attributed to him is *"Showing up is 80 percent of life."*

Let's take a leap here and assume a sales manager used that quote:

*"80% of your sales success is just making the calls."*

Well, true, we must *make a call* in order to get success. But 80% of that is NOT just being present and dialing the phone.

It would be (kind of) like saying, *"Yep, 80% of successful surgeries is just the doctor just showing up in the operating room."*

*"80% of your success in golf is just making it to the first tee."*

Umm, no.

My evidence is most of the prospecting calls and emails I get. It's apparent the rep is just showing up. Not putting any effort into doing any research. They are just sending the same generic (and horrible) cut & paste email or LinkedIn message, and/or phone call.

The showing up is most definitely necessary, but the most successful sales pros show up **prepared.** Hopefully that is YOU.

**SMART CALLING REPORT**
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/ Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:


**I experienced a disappointing,** expensive, and humbling sales lesson a few weeks ago.

Many of you know I have competed in barbecue cooking competitions over the past 20 years or so. Without getting into too much detail for the brief story, I've got a track record of being pretty good at it. I've won awards at a high level. I also get invited to bring my food to a lot of parties.

So I hadn't done a competition for about four years, although I still cook regularly (I own four high-end smokers. Some guys collect cars. Cookers for me). I had been missing it terribly for some time. I noticed there was a contest right here in the Phoenix area/ I got in it.

Since I don't do contests regularly like I did a few years ago in Omaha where I had an entire team, trailers, etc. all packed and ready to go each week, I had to make arrangements to rent a camper, buy equipment I didn't have etc.

I was jazzed.

And of course, I felt confident. I'm experienced. And even though I hadn't competed in a few years, I'm constantly practicing and tweaking my techniques and recipes.

So I cooked at the competition like I had in the past.

In fact, I felt I turned in as good--or better--brisket, ribs and pork than I had won with in the past (beating some of the guys you see on TV).

Fast forward to the results. I didn't come in DFL (dead f---ing last), but I was close.

My first reaction was, "What? How could this be? How could they not just love my stuff?" (Sound familiar, fellow sales pro, after losing a deal?)

But, reality kicked in. I've been doing this long enough to know that turning in meat at a competition for judges is way different than the product I serve to raving friends at parties, who say I should open a restaurant.

<u>My sales lesson:</u> It doesn't matter what **I think** is good. It only matters what **judges think is good**, at that very moment.

(Substitue "judges" with "prospects and customers.")

I am a Kansas City Barbecue Society Certified Judge. I took the class 15 years ago specifically so I could learn what judges are looking for. Then I judged a few contests, including the American Royal, the World Series of Barbecue. I interviewed other judges back then. I had it dialed in.

Things change. I didn't. Good food is good food, sure. But today, my understanding is many of these judges take themselves way too seriously, and are nitpicking and looking for things (exotic flavors, perfect surgical trimming of meat, shininess, placement in the box, etc.) that weren't a part of it years ago.

It's exactly the same as sales. What YOU think is great does not mean squat… unless they do too. The only way to find out, *is to find out.* In our case in sales, it's to ask. In my case with barbecue competition, it's to go through the judging class, actual judging, and interviewing again. Which I plan to do.

Now go and make this your best year ever!

Art

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# Sales Tips From the Field

I love hearing your tips and best practices. Keep them coming!

Smart Calling Facebook Community member, Mike Herberts, a sales trainer in the UK shared this with me.

### Start Hearing Objections and Resistance Differently

Here's an advanced technique for handling resistance and objections.

The technique involves you mentally adding some words to the end of whatever objection you are getting.

So for example the potential customer may be saying:

"We're perfectly happy with our current supplier and there's no need for us to change."

Or "Your solution is very expensive."

Or "My accountant has all that covered for me."

Whatever they say, you just mentally add a couple of words that will turn this 'objection' into a request for some more information.

For example, they say, "Your solution is very expensive."

But you HEAR,

"**Your solution is very expensive…isn't it?"**

They SAY 'My accountant has all that covered for me.'

But you HEAR,

"**My accountant has all that covered for me…don't they?"**

By doing this mental "trick" you will automatically want to continue rather than let your brain sub consciously disengage because '"you got an objection."

So now you are no longer getting objections you are getting "requests for more explanation or information."

### When Frustrated By Auto-Attendants

When prospecting and reaching an electronic switchboard, and after hitting "O" only to be told "That's not a valid option," Dale Sather said he simply has punched in numbers at random when the prompt asks for an extension. Occasionally it gets him transferred somewhere, anywhere, to a real live person who can then at least provide her some information.

### Responding to "I'm not interested."

In response to my recent podcast on how to respond to the early "I'm not interested" on prospecting calls, Marc Zazeela with APC Postal Logistics likes to say this:

**"Oh. I understand. I'm sure you have something that works fine. Most companies do. Other companies that were doing the same things you are have saved even more by using some of our ideas. My only objective is to show you how that might work so you can decide for yourself."**

### Get a *"Great No"*

We had Andrea Waltz, co-author of *"Go for No"* on The Art of Sales podcast (TheArtOfSales.com) this past month, and she shared tons of valuable tips that will change the way you look at no's, and motivate you to actually never fear them. Check it out if you haven't already, as well as ALL of the episodes.

Here is just one of her nuggets: "**A great NO is better than a bad YES."**

Think about that one for a minute. You've probably had a bad yes… when someone agrees to a follow up, but in retrospect, there was nothing there. And then we wasted valuable time chasing them, and perhaps ultimately never speaking with them. A good NO would have prevented that.

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# Getting Over the Fear of Picking Up the Phone

During our Inner Circle Call In Coaching Day, a member said he had a major problem with simply picking up the phone. He was good when he engaged a prospect in a conversation, and didn't have a problem asking for the business. The problem was simply dialing—part fear of resistance, and part something else we couldn't identify.

Here were some of my suggestions:

**1. Identify five prospects** you need to call.

**2. Just force yourself** to sit down and call one right NOW. We often put more energy into avoiding something, and feeling the associated pain, than simply diving in and DOING it.

**3. Set a time** each day to do the same. Never miss the appointment with yourself.

**4. Don't worry** about perfection. You'll never reach it. Just DO it.

**5. If you fear** what might happen on the call, look at it differently: Ask, "What's the worst thing that could happen if I place this call right now?" Usually the worst is a no. So what?

**6. Vividly picture** the feelings you'll have when you have successfully completed a calling session, and the results you are capable of getting.

## Success Quotes

*"Adversity is an experience, not a final act."*
**Dr. Michael Leboeuf**

*"If you don't fail now and again, it's a sign you're playing it safe."*
**Woody Allen** *(this one from him IS accurate)*

*"Failure is an event, never a person."*
**William D. Brown**

*"If you want to increase your success rate, double your failure rate."*
**Thomas Watson, Sr.**

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# How to Build a "What We Do" Statement That Grabs Interest Every Time

*(Note From Jim: This month's column is a bit longer than usual. Look at it as a mini sales training session. Stick with me, roll up your sleeves, and I guarantee you'll get more success on your calls.)*

Here's the scenario: You are at a trade show wandering around. Someone comes up to you, strikes up a conversation. At some point the person asks: "So, what do you do?"

Quickly: what do you say? Be honest here!

Chances are you say something like this:

- *I am sales rep with ...*
- *I am a sales consultant with …*
- *I am a marketing rep*
- *I work for a high tech reseller*
- *I work with a company that sells office supplies*
- *I work for a company that distributes electro-medical devices*
- *I am a financial planner*
- *I market diabetic supplies*
- *I work in on-line education*
- *I sell to petroleum marketers*
- *I'm in sales*
- *I work with a company that sells to school boards and districts*

Now, next question: what do the two things all these lines have in common?

First, they are dull, unimaginative and ho hum.

Why?

Because every sales rep uses these phrases. Sure they reflect the nature of your job or the company for whom you work, but that's it. No differentiation; just one of many vendors. No umph!

This leads to the second point: these paltry statements squander a *huge* selling opportunity. By telling people what you do in a more interesting and compelling manner you can actually promote yourself and your company. The very least you will do is get the prospect to say "Hey, that's different. Tell me a little more."

## The WWD or WID

What we are really talking about is a WWD which stands for "What we do." It is used in prospecting and typically occurs after you mention the name of your company. It helps orient the customer by giving them a glimpse at what you do. A WWD is also an abbreviated elevator speech. (In other words, you could use it at trade shows, at a social function etc.)

## The Two Motivators

While a WWD is only a few short words–more a phrase than a complete sentence–it is a powerful way to grab the attention of a prospect during an initial call. By getting the prospect to listen–and I mean truly *listen*–you improve the odds of success. If you sound like the rest of the vendor 'pack', prospects will tune out.

Before you can craft a powerful-in-your-face-go-get'em WWD you need to know a little about the two strongest motivators.

### *Gain*

The first motivator is called 'gain'. In broad terms, people will be motivated to take action (listen, review, ask for a quote, buy etc.) in order to "gain" or improve upon a situation. For example, people will be motivated to buy or take action in order to save money, make money, save time, improve efficiencies, better service etc. From a WWD perspective, here's what it might look like:

**"... we help engineers and architects get their educational credits quickly and easily."**

**"...I help people plan their retirement strategies..."**

**"...I help businesses and individuals use the phone more effectively to sell..."**

**"...We work with chiropractors to improve patient healthcare and increase revenues..."**

**"...We work with petroleum marketers to help improve cash flow and increase market share..."**

**"... I help businesses save money on everyday purchases of office supplies..."**

Certainly these WWDs are a marked improvement compared to the examples cited earlier. They are more effective because they relate a positive benefit to the listener. They appeal to the "gain" motivator.

### *Pain*

Pain is the second motivator. Prospects will also take action to avoid or alleviate 'pain'. If something is not right, if something is not working, if something is not performing well, people respond by taking action to solve it.

**Now this is important so read closely**. The real issue about pain is this: all things being relatively equal and given a choice between improving a situation (gain) and fixing a problem (pain*), the majority of people will fix the problem first.* In other words, *pain is usually the more powerful* of the two motivators. This makes perfect sense. A 'gain' represents a *future* opportunity but a 'pain' is usually a *current* nagging and persistent reality that normally requires immediate attention. Pain is like a toothache: it is constantly throbbing and hard to forget.

What this really means is that a WWD should actually focus on a problem (pain) that you or your company, or your product solves, because it appeals to the stronger of the two motivators. Here are some examples to illustrate the point:

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**"...I work with IT directors who are *struggling* to keep hardware and software costs in line..."**

**"I work with chiropractors who are finding it *challenging* to attract more clients and manage costs in their practice."**

**"We work with engineers and architects who find it *frustrating* and *time consuming* to get their yearly credits.'**

Make no mistake about it, these WWDs are going to turn heads (or should I say ears?). Again, if nothing else, they are different. They cannot help but be noticed. With proper thought and wording, the phrase touches a raw and exposed nerve. Prospects who have experienced even the slightest of 'pain' will want to want to listen further. They'll be curious, no question about it.

# 3 Steps to Building a Painful WWD

I wish I could take credit for this incredible insight but quite frankly I got the concept from marketing guru Robert Middleton. Middleton talks about building an elevator speech and he refers to a WWD as an "audio logo." He offers three steps:

### *1. Focus on a problem, not a solution*

As stated above, the trick to developing a powerful WWD is to focus on the problem because problems get more attention than opportunities. What this means is that you have to sit down and THINK about the problems you solve. This must be clear and concise in your mind. What do we fix? What pain do we remove? What challenges do we solve?

### *2. Use emotion-packed words*

Middleton is emphatic about using hard hitting, emotion-packed words. Consider the words 'frustrating', 'struggling', and 'challenging'. Do they not act like verbal beacons? Do they not conjure up vivid images? They tell it like it is. Here are two of Middleton's WWDs for financial planners.

**"I work with couples who are paralyzed about what to do with their investments when the stock market is such a mess."**

**"I work with investors who are going nuts about where to put their money in a falling stock market."**

These WWDs immediately hit a nerve with me. At one point I WAS paralyzed and going nuts. He hit the nail squarely on the head with his blatant use of the vernacular.

So grab a thesaurus and look for words that relate to the problems you deal with and that evoke emotion.

### *3. Keep it short and to the point.*

A WWD is a parenthetical phrase. It is not a paragraph. Stick to one idea and as Middleton points out, resist the temptation to balance a problem with a solution. The objective of the WWD is to get attention, not to sell them. There will be time for that later. Less is more.

### Test the WWD

Unless you are a gifted copywriter, chances are it will take you a few tries before you get the right mix of words. Test them by saying them aloud. Practice them until they flow smoothly from your lips. Then try the WWD on friends, associates and family. Tell them what you are trying to do. Get their feedback. Go back to the drawing board and come up with variations. As with any skill or technique, with practice it gets easier and better.

### Summary

In today's hectic, high competitive marketplace you need every edge you can get. The edge is often something small and unique that no one else is doing. This may be all you need to get one step closer to the sale. Give it a try.

*(Jim Domanski is President of TeleConcepts Consulting, a telesales consulting and training firm. Contact him at Jim@TeleConceptsConsulting.com, 613-591-1998)*

# Help Them Realize That Doing Nothing Is Costly

Procrastination by prospects and customers kills sales. The reason they shelve their decisions is they see no reason to act now. Your job is to help them understand why they should.

Mike Stickler, a consultant with a manufacturing consulting firm, shared an idea at a Telesales College on how he deals with procrastinators (which he calls his biggest competition: them doing nothing). He simply attaches very real, hard dollar numbers to their situation if they did nothing ...maintaining the status quo.

He's right to point out that if you can illustrate how what you have will enable your customer to enjoy a monetary gain, or avoid a loss, every day they delay means a lost opportunity, therefore lost money.

### Run the Numbers

For example, Mike will work through numbers with a potential client, getting them to actually figure up what the manufacturer might be losing due to a certain problem. Mike will then get them to break that down into smaller increments, like months, weeks. . . even days. If the sales process bogs down by procrastination, Mike is able to counter with,

**"Well, we have pointed out that every day that passes with this problem left unchecked, is like writing an expense check, directly from the bottom line for $2,000."**

Think about how this can work for you. Calculate the numbers with your customers or prospects. At the very minimum, ask them,

**"What will happen if you do nothing about this situation? Will it get any better?"**

Or,

**"Given what we have discussed, what are the consequences long-term of doing nothing?"**

# Ask the "Kondo Question" to Declutter Your Follow Up Files

Although I like to think I keep up on what's going on (somewhat) with pop culture, the whole Kondo thing got miles by me before I caught on.

It was just a few weeks ago. A Facebook friend posted pictures of her kitchen and said she "Kondoed" it.

Huh? I thought she meant that her apartment building might have gone condo. (Some people might have to look that one up.)

Anyway, I let it go. Then began to see the term all over. I'm not the brightest bulb in the drawer (mixed metaphor, I know), but I finally figured it out.

I then checked it out, not wanting to stay in the dark.

For those who don't know, Marie Kondo is a fanatical "declutterist." She has a book, and a very popular Netflix show. To simplify it, she has a radical philosophy about getting rid of things to tidy things up.

Where am I going with this?

I've suggested the same thing with prospects in your database long before there was such a thing as Kondo-ing.

For example, a question I received through email asked, "I've got a lot of prospects pending, but not a lot closing. What should I do?"

Like many questions I get, that's extremely vague and requires a lot more information before I could give a specific detailed answer. But it did get me thinking about a possible reason, and remedy.

It's the perfect place to implement the sales version of Kondo-ing. Let me set it up first.

What percent of the people in your follow-up file at this very second do you feel will ever do business with you?

Sixty percent?

More? Less?!

You're fairly typical if you answered 50% or less. It's not a good percentage, but typical.

Why? Oh, there are several reasons. Reps like to hang on to prospects, thinking that shred of interest might eventually turn into something. They're right: Disappointment, and a waste of time, usually.

Others stake their claim to prospects, tattooing their name on the prospect's record in the "system," just in case divine intervention comes into play and the person decides to call up and order on their own. These reps then usually pounce upon the order and say, "It's mine. See, has my name on it."

### Ask the Kondo Question

But, the main reason reps have too many "leads working" is that they don't ask the tough questions early enough. You need to find out if the person you're talking to is really a "player." It's always better to get a "no" early, than to waste time, effort, paper, and postage chasing shadows that never will materialize.

Here is what you need to do starting today.

Begin cleaning up your "non-prospect" prospects now. Ask this Kondo Question,

**"Mr./Ms. Prospect, we've been talking for awhile now, and have agreed that we'd be able to help you (fill in with how they would benefit.) I want to be sure I'm not bothering you, or wasting your time or mine. Tell me, what is the probability we'll be able to work together in the next month?"**

Think of the possible results here.

**1.** They say, "Zero probability." Great, now at least you can find out the real problem, or move them out. Movement, forward or out, is progress.

**2.** They give some other probability. Good, but not great. You want to ask what you both need to do to move forward now. Get specifics. Commitments. Ask them to attach time frames to the commitments. Don't allow them to continue putting you off. Again, movement here is success.

**3**. You just might get the business right now. Perfect. Sometimes all it takes is the nudge to get the boulder rolling down the mountain.

Do some database decluttering. Examine your follow-up files. Prepare your own strategy and ask the Kondo Question.

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out of its nine types of questions to "summarizing confirmation questions" (questions that make your buyer feel understood).

If you get this tip right, it might be the first time in your buyer's life that they've felt truly understood.

That's how rare it is.

Here's the phrase that makes it happen:

**"That's a valid concern. It seems like you're _____."**

Fill in the blank with an emotion you observed your buyer express. For example:

**"That's a valid concern Stacy. It seems like you're pretty torn on what to do here."**

## STEP FOUR: Isolate the Objection

Some objections are smoke screens. Your buyers *words* vs. what's *actually* stopping them from moving forward are sometimes different.

It's your job to make sure you're addressing the *true* objection. Otherwise, you're wrestling with smoke.

Here's the exact phrase that gets your buyer to voice the true objection**.**

**"If we somehow figure out how to solve that completely... what other obstacles would we have to overcome before moving forward?"**

If your buyer voices *other* objections, chances are those are the REAL things you need to overcome.

If they don't have any others, then the first objection they voiced is the right one.

Congratulations, you've isolated the objection :)

## STEP FIVE: Get Permission

Each of these steps in isolation seem SIMPLE. But when you put all seven together, **magic can happen.**

Your next piece to the puzzle is to neutralize your buyer's mind. Your goal is to make them receptive to a different way of thinking.

Without this critical step, you'll trigger resistance. You can do every other step, but if you leave this one out, your objection handling efforts will fall short.

First, here's what NOT to say to gain permission from your buyer:

*"Can I make a suggestion?"*

This question triggers defensiveness. Your buyer will not be receptive to your suggestions.

It triggers the "rebellious teenager effect." You'll come across as lecturing. At best, the buyer will smile, nod, and then ignore everything you say.

Here's the phrase that works like a charm:

**"Can I bounce a few thoughts off of you?"**

This question neutralizes your buyer's mind. It implies that YOU are the vulnerable one, not your buyer.

## STEP SIX: Address with a "Reframe"

If you've done the last five steps, you can now address the objection with a "reframe."

A reframe is an insight that changes how your customer thinks and feels about an objection, problem, or opportunity

Reframes get your buyer to see things through a new "lens."

Here's an example.

(**NOTE**: This example would *not* work without the previous steps. Without that padding, this is a trite argument. But *with* the previous steps, and with your buyer's permission, it will change the way your buyer thinks.)

Here at Gong.io, we try to get our buyers to *pilot* our software. And an objection we often face is this:

*"I don't want to start a pilot until after next month. We're too busy closing out the quarter. Right now is the worst time for us to do this."*

Our sales reps reframe that objection from "bad timing," to "perfect timing."

**"The conversations your team will be having before end of quarter will be higher-stakes, and more important to record. Right now is the best time."**

Stumped at coming up with your OWN reframes? Think of a common objection you're currently struggling with.

Got it? Now ask these questions about it:

Is the objection…

-A problem that can be reframed as an opportunity?

- A weakness that can be reframed as a strength?

- Poor timing that can be reframed as perfect timimg?

Ask those questions, and you'll come up with some great reframes.

## STEP SEVEN: Confirm an Unbiased Resolution

Don't LEAD the buyer to say what you want to hear. This leaves the objection unresolved, killing your deal later on.

Here's what to ask to bring closure to the objection:

**"What part of your concern do you feel is still left unaddressed?"**

The exact phrasing of this question matters.

You DON'T want to say something like "Does that resolve your concern?"

That might lead your buyer to giving you a false "yes." And remember: Objections buried alive never die :) They come up later as killer zombies.

Now, if your buyer responds with "no, we can move on," CONGRATS! You've overcome the objection!

*(Chris Orlob is with Gong.io. Gong captures all of your sales conversations, phone calls, web conferences, and emails. It then uses AI to uncover the stuff won deals are made of. Go to Gong.io and request a demo.)*

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### Yes, Bring Up a Negative. And then Obliterate it Later

Experienced negotiators often make demands called throwaway points, which are minor concessions they are willing to make later at little or no cost to them, but of great perceived value. Sales reps can use a variation of this technique by mentioning something during your sales presentation that might cause some resistance...but will be easy for you to solve and cinch the sale. For example, let's say you have some flexibility on delivery terms. During the sales presentation you might say that your standard shipping time is one week. If they complain, saying that won't work for them, you have the option of asking them if they would buy if Second Day Air was provided. In what areas do you have possible throwaway points? Shipping, extended warranties, and additional items all can be added to help win the sale. Use them if you need to.

### Be an Approved Vendor to Sell More

A sales manager shared an idea that works well with his telesales reps. Companies often have approved vendor lists upon which any seller must be listed before the prospect could purchase. Instead of following the route that many salespeople take, trying to sell the prospect first, his reps ask the operator or screener if there is an approved vendor list, and if so, how they can get on it. The callers follow the appropriate steps, then when speaking with the prospect, it's a real door-opener to mention that they're already on the list.

### The "What We Can Do" Commitment Statement

After getting buying signals (or at least in the absence of resistance), sum up what you and the prospect have agreed on, and suggest the next action, which would include the commitment:

**"Well Shawn, it looks like we're in agreement that this is the system that will address both your current and anticipated load levels...what we can do is take the next step and begin processing the paperwork. What do you think?"**

### Tease Them With Your Possible Value

Never call to say, "I'd just like to talk to you about our products." That's a sure way to prompt the listener to immediately hit his "delete" function and purge your message into electronic oblivion. So, why would they want to either return your call or enthusiastically accept your next one? Tell them.

Hint—and only hint—at something they'd be interested in hearing. Tell them that you have additional information they'll be happy to hear, you have more ideas that can help them, or you've given further thought to their situation and have a few more solutions, etc. Make them curious.

### Give Them an Action Item

When agreeing to a follow-up call give them an action item, something they should do between now and the next time you call. For example, **"...and if you could have available the specific performance numbers you'll require, I'll be able to give you the best recommendation for your application."**

### Put Price in a Different Perspective

If your prospect or customer grouses about high price, shift his/her thinking more to the long-term value they'll receive. Try this question:

**"Are you looking more at the one time price, or are you looking at the overall long-term cash flow?"**

Here are variations:

**"Is the price you're paying today the primary criterion, or are you figuring in the total savings you'll get over the life of the product because you won't have to pay for maintenance?"**

**"Sure, if you were to keep it for only one year, the cash outlay is more for our model, but have you looked at the energy savings over the projected life of the system?"**

Art Sobczak's

SMART CALLING REPORT

February 2019 Volume 36 Number 2

# Outrageous "Gatekeeper" Techniques, and Actually a Few You Can Use

Seems like a day doesn't go by when the "Content Marketing Manager" of some company sends me something they'd like me to print or share on social media.

Like most of the "cold" calls I get, a majority of these have no relevance to my audience, showing that the sender did no research first.

This past month I got one that was relevant, however the messaging was way off.

The people at the company, TollFreeForwarding.com send me a link to this article: *"Impersonation, Fabrication and Compliments: How Sales Teams Try to Beat the Gatekeeper."* (Google the title if you'd like to see the entire thing.)

Of course, my first reaction was, "You've got to be kidding me. Another article about treating the assistant as an adversary."

And just the phrase, "Beat the Gatekeeper" goes against everything I stand for.

Well, there were quite a few outrageous, ridiculous, and even unethical techniques in the article. I'll share a couple of those with you—for entertainment purposes. And then, they did actually list a few that are worthwhile, and that I have suggested.

## Avoid These

Here are some "real life" techniques they said some sales reps are using. (And this is contributing to the negativity that some people feel toward our profession.)

### The Radio DJ

Hard to believe, but a rep calls and impersonates a radio announcer, saying,

"Hi [Gatekeeper] it's [DJ NAME] from [RADIO STATION]. How are you today?"

He says,

"They usually get so excited thinking they've won something, so they put me through."

No. Just no.

### The School Principal

Again, I can't believe they would even print this more blatant lie. A rep claims he calls into the HR department and says,

"Hi, this is Principle Wood calling – could you just pass me onto [NAME], I have an urgent matter to discuss with them regarding their children".

Amazing.

### Embarrassing Scenarios

And yet another.

"Good afternoon, could I speak to Mr/Mrs [NAME] please? It's with regards to this afternoon's visit from our debt collection team".

They say to "Hit the gatekeeper with a potentially sensitive subject, and they'll pass you over out of sheer embarrassment."

The article then goes on to list about eight others, with varying degrees of outrageousness.

But then, they do a quick reversal, and say, "These outrageous examples are unlikely to see you attain your final goal, particularly if your elaborate tale is unraveled. Instead, we'd recommend adopting some of the advice below – given to us by those who have been there and done it."

Ah, I see. So, they were using National Enquirer or online "clickbait" techniques to get us sucked in, and NOW they will say, "Just kidding."

OK.

To their credit, a few of their recommended techniques are good, and recommended. Although they still use the term, "beating the gatekeeper."

I'm reprinting these pretty much verbatim.

### Kindness Goes a Long Way

Similar to one of the stories outlined above, beating the gatekeeper could actually be as simple as being nice to the gatekeeper. That doesn't necessarily mean you have to conjure up a compliment as that might come across as disingenuous.

Sometimes, just being a normal, nice human being can be enough.

"It's best to be up-front and clear in your requests to show them that you care about their time." Paymo's Marcel Andrei told us.

"I say please twice, once at the beginning and end of my request.

**"Hi there, my name is Marcel from Paymo, the project management platform. It looks like your manager has downgraded their account with us. Could you please connect me with him/her to discuss this issue in more depth, please/"**

"And it works, because kindness can bring you a long way".

### Go Off Script

Conversations between a sales caller and gatekeeper can often take a formulaic approach. You may have

*(continued on page 7)*

# Sales Observations

**Here's a good strategy when** you know you are up against a few other vendors. Simply ask, **"Can I be the last to present?"** Or, **"May I have the last at bat?"** When you know there will be several players vying for the business, and you are presenting to a group, ask to be the last one they hear. This way, you can get a feel for what was already presented, and the last presentation typically has the freshest, strongest impact.

**Further, when there will be several** decision makers, ask your contact for a rundown on them, their backgrounds, interests, etc. Ask whether any of them already have a preferred vendor or favor any of the other presenters. Sell your contact as much as you can before the presentation. Ask them if they will be in your corner. I've had people like this lobby for me BEFORE the call.

**Here's a tip for presenting via** conference calls to groups: Plant some questions in your contact's mind that he should ask the other presenters. Of course these will be areas in which you are strong. This way, it ensures the competitors must reveal their weaknesses, or at least present in areas that aren't as strong as yours.

**SMART CALLING REPORT**
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:


**The law of gravity will naturally** pull your attitude down unless you regularly do something to keep it up. Here's something I like to do. I set up an email folder titled "Feel Goods." In it I store the complimentary emails, testimonials, and occasional fan letter. When I start to get pulled down, I go to the folder and instantly get picked up.

**When someone is not ready to** buy today, and they are not even that hot of a prospect, here's something to try that could salvage something for the future:

**"What can I say to be involved with you when you are ready to buy?"**

**I needed to grab a bite to eat** between two connecting flights. At the airport foodcourt I found a decent looking Chinese place. They had a two entrée special, and a three-choice option that's about three bucks more. They were super busy, and the person behind the counter greeted customers with New York deli-type urgency, blurting out, *"Whatwouldyoulikeplease!"*

Here's the sales technique: after each person gave their two choices,the woman behind the counter barked out,

**"And?"**

Most of the people I saw, including myself, added a third choice of Kung Pao something or another. And another three dollars to the sale.

Think of the opportunities you have to increase the size of your sales. The best time to get someone to buy more is when their wallet is out. Often it is just as simple as one question. Or one word.

**Prior to my training session with** the sales team I worked with last week I sat in on the "State of the Company" addresses from the top leaders in the company. One mentioned a brilliant phrase that you can implement as a strategy also, if you have a Goliath in your industry, and you are more like David.

This company provides awesome database software, services, and support. They are growing, but not massive. They do pride themselves on truly caring about what is best for the customer, and I can vouch for that.

What is the phrase?

A reason that companies should do business with them is,

"**Because we are not Oracle.**"

Of course Oracle is the behemoth in the industry. So this is taking what someone might consider being a negative (being smaller) and turning it into a positive.

I can think of many of you right now who can use this. Maybe you already are.

"**Because we are NOT amazon.**"

"**Because we are NOT Costco.**"

"**Because we are NOT (fill in with the "Goliath" of your industry).**"

Of course this all needs to be in context, and has to be backed up with the reasons why.

Now go and make this your best month ever!

Art

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## What to Do When They Don't See the Value in Saving Money

Sometimes having a lower price, or being able to help someone save money isn't a sure bet to close a sale.

Let's say you've reached the point where you've pointed out the savings you could show for the customer, yet that still doesn't inspire them enough to give you a "yes." You want to beat your head against the desk and say, "Dummy, open your eyes." Don't. It hurts.

Instead, analyze the real problem: he simply isn't associating the dollar amount he's overpaying now as a big enough problem, or viewing the savings as a large enough solution to a problem. Therefore, your job is to present it in a way that helps him to think differently.

As with any objection, the first action is to determine if that truly is the only factor keeping them from buying. Ask, **"Is it that your feelings about the savings not being significant enough the only thing keeping you from moving forward?"** After getting confirmation, then move to the next step. Consider,

❑ Putting the savings in terms of profits. **"That's money that drops directly to your bottom line."**

❑ Profits, in terms of additional sales they would need to get. **"Let's look at this in terms of what you'd need to sell to realize this much profit. Based on your 10% margin, you'd have to sell another $10,000 worth of your products just to show the $1000 profit I'm basically giving you."**

❑ Relating it to common expenses. **"With this savings you could make the monthly payments on three of your delivery vans. It would be like we're actually buying your trucks!"**

Showing savings or having a lower price helps only when they perceive the value they'll get. So make it clear to them!

☎

## Your Regular Buyer Left. Now What?

So you've been beaten up pretty badly for the day. Your prospecting yielded zilch, and you're gazing up at a quota number that seemingly appears helium-filled, floating a bit more out of your grasp every day.

Paging through your CRM, looking for a member of the 20% club of your account base that represents 80% of your business, you're searching for a slam dunk that will book you some quick numbers so you can get close to your number for the month.

Ah-ha, here's one! Looks like it's time for them to order.

*"Quality Industries, may I help you?"*

"Yes," you respond confidently. "I'd like to speak with Kyle Johnson."

*"I'm sorry, but Mr. Johnson is no longer with our company."*

Your heart sinks faster than a high-rise elevator. You're searching for an intelligent response. "Uhhhh," is the first sound you can muster. "What happened to him?"

"He's just no longer with the company." Code words for being canned. Wonderful, here's a guy you had a great relationship with, always had time to shoot the bull (maybe that's why he's no longer there), and always could be counted on for an order. He loved your products. Oh well, better find out who the new guy is. So you get the name of Jennifer Stevens, hang up, and regroup.

Ever been in that situation? Most of us have. Here's what you don't want to do.

*"Hi 'ya, Jennifer? Hey, I'm Dale Wilson with Complete Supply. I hear you took ol' Kyle Johnson's place. Well, Kyle used to buy all his fittings and bearings from me, and I know it's getting about time for you guys to reorder and I'm sure you'll want to do the same thing, so I'd like to talk with you a bit about the way he did things and get you going on your next order here."*

That would only be funny if I hadn't heard it before. Many times, actually.

Let's look at some better alternatives for working with new buyers.

**1. Don't Assume.** Keep in mind the new person had a life before taking this position, and might have existing relationships with other vendors—maybe even stronger than the one you had with the person he/she replaced. Coming across cocky is a lock to get you crossed off the list.

**2. Send a Welcome Note or Card.** When you learn the new person's name, hand write a card and note, congratulating them on their position. DO NOT sell in the card. Mention you look forward to speaking with them, and sign it with your name, and your company's name. They won't get much mail personally addressed to them during their first few weeks on the job, so your gesture will be memorable.

**3. Learn About Them.** You likely have allies in the department. Snoop around. Learn where the person came from, personal interests, what they've been doing in their first few days there.

**4. Call to Introduce Yourself, Add Value**. Here's where you need to make the best impression. **"Hello Ms. Stevens, I'm Dale Wilson with Complete Supply. First, congratulations again on your new position with Quality Industries.** *(pause, chit chat)* **I've had the opportunity over the past several years to provide Quality with bearings and fittings that the engineering department says works superbly in your line of wheels and components. I know you're probably quite busy in your new position there, and I'd like to arrange a time when we could take about 20 minutes by phone to discuss how you like to deal with vendors, your preferences, and anything that I can do to make your job run smoothly."**

Notice this approach is focused entirely on the new buyer, not on the caller. Granted, notice the caller is coming in with some status, that of a long-time vendor. But he's not flaunting it and ramming it down the new buyer's throat as that's the way things have and will be done.

Oh, by the way. Do find out where your old buyer went and call him there.

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# How and When to "Get Back" to Clients

A question for you: how long before you respond to a voice message or email from a client?

Within minutes?A couple of hours? The end of the day?Two days?

There is an art and a science to responding to messages from clients and prospects. I'll show you when you should respond and why. We'll discuss how to strike a balance between being customer-focused and still being effective in your day-to-day selling activities.

## The Situation

Here's what prompted this column: I was in the process of revising the shopping cart for my web site and was dealing with one of the major merchant card companies. My rep, Melissa, and I started off on the right foot. Melissa explained what she needed from me. I got the information and called back. Got her voice mail. Fine. No problem, yet. It was her message though, that staggered me. It informed me that she would respond within 24-48 hours!

Can you believe it?

And she was true to her word. Regrettably. About 36 hours later she called back … at 9:00 p.m. (I wasn't there for the call. Gee, go figure)…and left a message to call her back. I did so the next morning at 8:30. Her response was better than the first call: *only* 27 hours later.

This continued twice more.

To make a long story short, guess who's not getting the business?

## The Two Options

Melissa is probably the exception rather than the rule for response times. Getting back to a customer or a prospect is important stuff. Determining WHEN you make that call back or respond to that e-mail is the key. There are two simple options:

### *Option 1: Immediate Response*

Some will argue that you should immediately respond to an email or a voice message the moment your light flashes or your computer alerts you. You pick up the message and dial or type. Simple. Easy. Fast. Client focused.

But is it smart?

I have seen reps drop everything, regardless of how important the matter, and pick up the phone. They become slavish to responding to clients and prospects. And many times, the request by the client is minor but nevertheless time consuming. They are forever in the response mode. Reactive. On the surface, they appear to be very sales or customer service focused.

But are they *really*, and at what cost?

The moment you drop something to respond is the moment you get behind on other activities. Other clients suffer. You suffer. When you are in a constant reactive state, it is difficult to do the things that need to be done. We put aside important but less (apparently) urgent activities and tasks … like prospecting… or reports …or whatever.

### *Option 2: Delayed Response*

Another option is to batch your emails and voice mails and schedule them for a reply periodically throughout the day.

I like this approach because it puts you in control of your time. It helps you manage important but not urgent matters and helps ensure that things get done. The key point here is that it puts you in the proactive mode rather than the reactive mode.

The only challenge is to determine how often you should batch and respond during the day.

## How to Create a Response Time

**1. Establish a Standard**

The trick to responding to clients is to set a standard and stick to it. A standard defined is "a degree or level of excellence." It is your stated policy of when you shall respond to a customer contact.

How do you set this standard?

Understand, each business will have their own response standard. It will vary depending on the nature of your business and the nature of your customers and products.

For instance, if you are in a commodity-driven market where price quotes and availability are vital, your response time might be 30 minutes or an hour.

Why?

Because the customer or prospect has choices of where to get the product. There are alternatives and you need to be response-oriented.

If, on the other hand, your product is a little more complex and the selling is a little more consultative, it might be a matter of hours. You must calculate how urgent typical requests might be. If you respond in two to three hours, it might be sufficient. Your client is happy and you can still be proactive.

If you are a field rep and you travel, your response time might be a day; 24 hours. This may or may not be the best time. Only you, your boss and your client can ultimately decide this. So the point is, sit down and analyze your situation and create your standard.

**2. Communicate the Standard**

After you create the standard, you must communicate it to your clients. Educate them. You do this through your voice mail. Explain precisely what

*(continued on next page)*

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will happen. For instance,

**"I am unavailable to take your call right now but if you leave your name and telephone number, I will get back to you within two hours of your message."**

Be clear. Let everyone know precisely what your response time is.

If you are away from the office on holiday, sick or whatever, explain that in your voice mail. If you work shift work and won't be in until 11:00, advise the caller in your voice mailbox. Do the same thing with your e-mail messages. Send an auto response if you are not in so the client understands there might be a delay. Offer an alternative solution if they need to speak to someone.

### *3. Commit to the Standard*

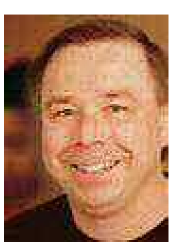
The next action is to strictly follow your response standard. If the standard is every two hours, do it.

Here's how. Use your Outlook or whatever planning system you use to schedule your response time. For example, enter "call backs" two or three or whatever times per date at specific times. Stick to the schedule. Resist the temptation to check your e-mail and voice mail. Be disciplined. You will discover that clients quickly learn you are true to your word and are dependable. They WILL accept it.

### Summary

Establishing a response time is a simple and easy to do. It helps you take control of your time and your sales destiny. It puts you in the driver's seat and allows you to get important things done.

Try it. It works.
Good Selling.



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## Create Your Own Emotional Descriptions

Here's a great training exercise. Sit down with fellow reps and have a brainstorming session where you discuss what people experience as a result of buying from you. Talk in terms of their emotions. Then come up with analogies and descriptive words, terms, and phrases that help listeners to actually live the experience before they buy from you. Get all the senses involved.

Can they see, feel, touch, taste, or hear the results? If so, how? Put yourself in the position of the person experiencing the results and create images that are as emotion-evoking as possible.

Associate the emotions with ones you know they have experienced before. By the way, don't talk about buying from you; focus on them using your product or service. Nothing beats actually demonstrating a product or service so that prospects can experience the results first hand. In absence of that, however, you can get close by creating those emotions with your words.

Focus on the great feelings they want and expect, and you'll sell more every time.

## Get Personal With Your Benefits

One of the strongest overlooked buying motivators is how a purchasing decision affects the buyer personally. Saving the company a few man-hours here or there might not be too exciting, but if you learn that your prospect is in line for a bonus based on coming in under budget, THAT could be huge for you.

Can buying from you,

- make their job easier?
- make it more fun?
- help them make money?
- make them look good in the eyes of people that matter?
- avoid any other problem or pain they personally are affected by?

Get them talking about these areas.

**"How does that affect you?"**

**"What would change for you if you moved forward?"**

**"What effects would this have on your job?"**

*(continued from cover page)*

agonized for days over your script, but they will have likely heard it all before and have a similar script in place to combat you. In response, Michael Neufield from the Hunter Davis Group uses a technique he calls "script interrupt":

"I go straight at a gatekeeper giving them all of the information they would typically ask for: name, who I am with, and the nature of my call. This interrupts their typical script and puts me in control of the conversation.

"You can also ask their name first (provided they did not just tell you when they answered the call). This humanizes the call and the gatekeeper. I have found this technique helps to put the gatekeeper and myself on the same level."

### Send Them a Gift

If words aren't enough to get you where you need to be, you could go the extra mile and purchase them a gift – as El Mejor Trato's Cristian Rennella suggests:

"The best strategy we have found to beat the gatekeeper is 10 days before making the call, send a creative gift. Something new and creative that awakens his or her curiosity – and also make sure it is something office-based. This way, when you call, they will know exactly who it is".

It could also help you reignite a trail that has gone cold, as Debra Benton, once found: "After being a little sharp with the gatekeeper I knew I was doomed. So, after the appointment, I went to a Godiva store nearby and bought a significantly sized box of chocolates and brought them back to her.

"I explained that I was wrong, I appreciate her job, and thanks for the help despite my sharpness. She never forgot and I never forgot to be a whole lot better to them." Note: of course you could **send** a gift, too.

In summary, this should have been two articles. One on the outrageous things some sales reps do that demean the entire profession. And the other, actual techniques that are real, and work.

You know what to do. Pick out what you can use here when getting to buyers, and implement them. And remember, always treat everyone as if they were the buyer.

# Don't Make Liars Out of Your Prospects

A sales rep travels nowhere on a prospecting phone call. Because he thinks he's doing something productive, or he's in a rush to minimize the pain and get off the phone, he utters one of these laughable phrases,

*"Well, keep us in mind, OK?"*

*"Here's my number, write it down just in case."*

*"How about I give you a call in six months or so?"*

When I'm the prospect, I really do feel quite guilty (OK, maybe only slightly. All right, not the least bit of remorse.) when I respond with an "OK, I will keep you in mind," or when I'm feigning interest and scribbling down their phone number while I'm actually doodling.

These phrases make liars out of prospects.

Face it. They have no intention of "keeping us in mind," let alone writing down our number. These phrases don't accomplish anything positive, and give no reason for the listener to *ever* want to consider "keeping you in mind" or calling you. But you can and should salvage something from these calls. Here's what you should do and say instead.

### 1. Determine if There *Ever* Would Be Potential

A money- and time-wasting mistake is hanging on to prospects when there's no shred of evidence that the person is a prospect. Maybe you've experience it: these "prospects" are recycled through your system. You peruse the notes, get that aching pang in your stomach recalling your last dead-end call. And since there's nothing leading you to believe they're any better of a prospect today...you page through to the next prospect, postponing the inevitable. Or you call and experience either rejection or another put-off.

Another error is letting them go when, indeed, there *might* be some potential. Find out for sure. Ask,

**"Ben, under what circumstances would you ever see yourself considering another vendor?"** Notice the wording here. It's a question that not only asks if they ever would use someone else, but it also asks for the circumstances that would surround it. For example, I've heard prospects respond,

"Well, I suppose if I ever got into an emergency situation where they weren't able to deliver, I'd have to look elsewhere." Then you have an opportunity to pick up on that remark and continue questioning.

On the other hand, if they say, "Look, you're wasting your time buddy. Quit calling me," write them off and move on. And feel good about it, since you obtained a decision.

### 2. Proactively Give Them Something To Think About

To reiterate, *"Keep us in mind,"* is a worthless phrase. If you truly want someone to keep you in mind, give them a reason. And tie it into a problem they might experience—a problem you could solve. That might prompt them to not only think of you, but better yet, to call you.

Let's say you know you can help a company lower their property taxes, but they either don't see the need at this point, or don't believe you. You might end the call with,

**"I still feel we can help you. Here's something to consider: when you review your property tax itemization, take a look at the specific valuation and charges for your out-of-state properties. If you feel those taxes are high and question them, keep in mind we are specialists on the tax laws in every state, and know the best way to challenge, and eventually lower the bill. I'll send you a card with my number on it, so keep it in your tax file, and give me a call then if you feel it would help."**

Don't make liars out of people. The process is simple. Determine if there ever will be potential. Give them examples of situations to look for, and associate them with the problem you can solve. When they do experience these problems, you'll have a greater chance of them thinking of you. ☎

## 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. ☎

## 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."* 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 . . ."**

☎

# Get Rid of the Avoidance Behavior that Hinders Your Sales

Picture the sales rep who spends two prime hours every day reading surfing online "doing research."

And the rep who feels obligated to assume ownership of all minuscule customer service situations—ones easily delegated—because she wants to be certain they're handled correctly. And her call productivity suffers as a result.

Or, the salesperson who is always fixated on one "big deal" devoting tons of time—at the expense of placing other calls—working on the proposal.

Know anyone like these people? *ARE* you one of these people?

If so, you are flat out avoiding something. And probably denying it.

There are all kinds of avoidance behaviors. Whenever I get particularly ambitious around the house, tightening things, replacing filters, I usually get honest with myself: I should be parked in front of a computer, preparing for a training program or writing articles.

What non-sales activities do you engage in that steal from your productive selling time?

Or, what call behaviors do you practice that are not as effective as what you should do? For example, some reps insist on just asking a few questions during a first call, "touching base" on a second call, then phoning a few more times before finally getting into the meat of selling. They rationalize that they're building a relationship. Bunk. They're constructing a fat follow-up file. Sure they're busy, but it's like running on a treadmill. Lots of sweat, but no forward progress. Oh, but they're building "relationships."

Here's how to deal with your avoidance behavior.

**1. Make a commitment to improve.** If you don't have that "want to," read no further.

**2. Pinpoint what you know you should do, but don't, or don't do it often enough.**

**3. Identify the activity or behavior that you rationalize as important, but deep down you know it's a mask.** This is where you need to be brutally honest with yourself.

**4. Determine what activity or behavior you will replace it with.** For example, asking for the bigger sale earlier, sending out fewer proposals to only the more highly qualified prospects, or spending less time internally chasing down answers to questions and delegating more instead.

**5. Set specific, quantifiable, time-sensitive goals.** Write them out. **Any time** is a great time to start, even if it is not the first of the year.

**6. Take action.** Track your progress.

**7. Reward yourself**! What gets rewarded gets repeated.

So why wait? Don't avoid it any longer. Take some action, any action right now that you've been avoiding. You'll be glad you did.

## When You're Not Familiar With the Competitor

What should you do when a prospect compares you to a competitor you're not familiar with?

Ask them for more information.

**"I'm really not familiar with that company Mr. Mason. Please tell me about them?"**

Some prospects will even send you price lists, brochures, and proposals from the competitor. Or, get the phone number from them and call for the information yourself.

☎

## How to Deal With the Non-Decision Making Information Collector

You might have experience with this person: the one who calls you or fills out your web form and wants information, but they can't get any clearer about what they want than what is written on the meager notes in front of them.

What likely has happened here is the boss walked by and instructed the assistant to "find out something about ______."

You've probably had these frustrating calls.

There *could* be potential...you just can't tell based on speaking with this person.

And it's equally frustrating for them, since they're unable to answer your probing questions.

In cases like this it's always suggested to get as much info as you can, as minimal as it might be.

**"Any reason at all why he asked you to collect this information?"**

**"Who else are you calling?"**

**"What's happening in your department that might prompt the need for information on _____?"**

Bottom line, your best move with this person is in attempting to get to the boss. (It's OK here.) Justify your reasoning so they'll let you through:

**"Pat, I'd be able to provide you with the best information if I just knew more about the reason for the request, and specifically what the boss is looking for. If I provide you with a list of questions, could you pass those on? Or, better yet, could I speak with her directly?"**

Stepping on someone's head to get to the real buyer can usually cause more harm than good. Work **with** your contact instead, and you'll show more success.

☎

### Prepare Your Calling Area for Success

Some reps' work spaces look like the aftermath of a tornado.Quite distracting, to be sure. Others often are caught unprepared on calls, prompting them to dig wildly through files on a call like a dog searching for a buried bone. Think they're paying attention to what's happening on the call? Fat chance. Place all the prompts and resources you'll need during the day in front of you, and clear away the distractions. You'll be better prepared and more focused.

### Be Specific With Your Questioning

Avoid using questions like,

*"Does that happen a lot?"*

*"Do you experience that often?"*

*"Was there much of an impact?"*

Think about if a customer answered "yes" or "no" to those questions. You wouldn't really know any more than before you asked. Instead, get better information by asking for specific information: "How often has that happened in the past three months?"

**"What has been the impact on your department in terms of increased sales?"**

### 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."**

### Vintage Sales Ideas

I was reviewing some past training programs I had done for clients, looking for ideas I could share with you, and came across some from a client whose reps 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.)

### Try These Trial Closes

After you've presented a few benefits, and nothing but silence greets you at the other end, resist the tendency to continue with the presentation. What you are saying may not be of interest to the listener. Find out what they think and feel about what you've said: **"Am I going in the right direction?",** or **"Am I talking about what you're interested in?"**

### 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?"**

Art Sobczak's

# SMART CALLING REPORT

March 2019 Volume 36 Number 3

# Responding to "I already work with someone." AND Online Advice On It to Avoid

It's my job—my passion, actually—to consume whatever I can find on sales tips, strategies, advice, training, etc., distill it down, tweak it, test it, and share it in a variety of ways, including this publication, like I've been doing for over 30 years.

Back in the day, that mostly consisted of going through books, audios, and workshops by established sales experts. Along with articles published in actual business magazines and trade publications by experts and people in the field who were showing results. Those were words printed on real paper with ink.

Today, of course *EVERYONE* publishes their advice and thoughts. That's what social media is. And a lot of it is not good. In fact, some of it is detrimental if it is used.

Sure, you can find some real gold out there. But there's a lot of silt, too.

This month I'm taking a situation that I've covered a lot over the years, and show how it was handled in a recent LinkedIn discussion.

I'll break these down as if I were coaching a rep live, or a call recording.

## The Objection

The question on LinkedIn was,

***How do you overcome "I already work with someone?"***

One popular response was,

*"I am so happy to hear that! Does that person solve all of your business challenges? If not, I can share a quick story where I doubled a company's revenue in under 2 years and could do the same for you. Can I come by tomorrow to discuss?"*

Responders were gushing over that one with reactions like,

"Wow, that is great!"

"Amazing!"

The real problem with lots of these online discussions is you have people in many cases sharing suggestions they actually do not use in the real world, and others who probably would be afraid to use them, but are wowed by them, who believe that is a good thing to say.

I always analyze things both from a salesperson, and buyer perspective.

If I heard that response, I would think the person was a jerk. You can "do the same for me?" You don't know that, and we have not established that.

(However, a question at the beginning *is good*—although not that one—as I'll point out later.)

## "Other than that..."

Here's another:

*"Of course! I already knew that before I called you. Let me ask you, other than you working with someone else, is there any other reason you wouldn't give me a few minutes of your time?"*

Again, from the comments, minds were blown in amazement. Seriously? My response to this would be,

"Nope. That's it. See ya."

If I had to pick out a positive, the acknowledgment that we expected them to already be working with someone is good… as I will address in a bit.

Another:

*"I perfectly understand that you are working with someone. What I would like to suggest that we have a quick call so that way you have a better idea of what we do if anything changes."*

That is all about… who?

The salesperson!

I don't care what YOU would like to do, and I do not care at this point what you do.

There were a number of others that were pretty much copied out of old sales books and/or recommended by people who had "sales trainer" in their description, which based on their responses indicates they probably haven't sold much themselves. For example,

*"So I can better understand, if you could change one thing about their product or service what would it be?"*

Please… they might as well suggest the *"If you could wave a magic wand"* technique.

## What Should Be Said

OK, now that I've trashed a bunch of these, what should be said?

Let me qualify this with, I don't claim to have all the answers, or the only answer.

And, there are many things that can work occasionally, by a certain individual at the perfect time. But most people in general would go down in flames if they tried them.

My suggestions are based on years and years of experience… selling, coaching, teaching, researching, writing, testing, observing, being kicked in the teeth, and more.

*(Continued on Page 3)*

# Sales Observations

**I had a contractor come out to** do an estimate. The woman asked great questions, took notes, made some recommendations on things I had not thought about, wrote up the estimate on the spot, and just handed the clipboard to me with a pen and said,

"**You want to go with this, right?**"

It was that simple.

No hesitation in her voice.

An assumptive, but not pushy attitude and tone.

She knew I needed the work done, otherwise I would not have called and took the time to have an estimate done. The easy thing was to just go with the estimate.

It doesn't get much more fundamental than this, and it's something we all should follow. When someone contacts you for a quote or for information, they have a reason for doing so.

I see too many organizations spend heavily on generating inquiries, and then sales reps don't treat them with urgency, and like the precious gems they are.

Lots of studies show that they will ultimately do something with someone, it might as well be you.

So, have a similar assumptive attitude, and be sure you ask--not wish--for the sale.

**SMART CALLING REPORT**
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:


**When you are using email prior** to your Smart Call, of course we want to use the same process, mentioning the intel or connection we have. A good tip to show your credibility is to actually include the link you are referencing. For example, "Congrats on the Best In Category award you received last week (YourCityBusinessJournal.com/link)."

**Here is some great sales intelligence** for you. A *Wall Street Journal* article suggested that you pay attention to those automated "Out of Office" replies you get in response to emails.

In the responses the person often provides names of others you could contact in their absence. These names could be other decision makers.

If you're prospecting it could give you contacts who either could influence or make a decision.

The article cited another example where the out-of-office note said the human resources manager at a hospital had left the company. The sales rep then contacted her successor, whose contact information was in the note.

**I've had this same question several** times in seminars and just received it in an email:

"Art, Is it ok or not to tell potential customers that I am doing business with their competitors? I am in a technical sales field selling electric motors and gear boxes."

My answer is, there are two ways to go with this. In some industries, it can be beneficial, since it adds credibility.

In others, some companies want no part of you if you are working with their competitors because they are afraid you will share trade secrets.

It depends on what is being sold as well. If the nature of your business is where you get intimate with the customer and its methods, they might want you to themselves.

I guess the real answer is, analyze your situation, understand the implications, try it and see what happens.

**Add this phrase to the list of** meaningless things people say and probably do not realize they say it (I realized I do it too, but I'm working on eliminating it): Starting a thought with "I was going to say…" Huh? You were **going** to say? You just said it. When were you **going** to say it? Why didn't you? How about just **saying** it.

**Here's a good technique I heard** for getting someone to volunteer if there are others involved in a decision.

After you qualify someone, and they tell you they're the decision maker, say,

**"It's nice to work with someone who can make a decision on their own, without having to go to a committee."**

If they're not the decision maker, to save face they'll tell you they want to run it by their crew, manager, etc. That tells you there's more than one decision maker.

Now go and make this your best month ever!

Art

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*(Continued from Cover Page)*

What I suggest is always under the umbrella of "What will minimize that chance for resistance for most people, and maximize the chance for success, based on basic human behavior principles?"

So, based on that, I've always taught that the best way to respond to this is to first understand **why** they might possibly say it.

### Two Reasons

**1.** It's a Resistant Reflex Response, meaning there is no substance there and they are just trying to get you off the phone. Or,

**2.** They are working with someone (without whatever degree of happiness doesn't matter) and the easiest thing to say at that moment is they are happy, because even considering changing the status quo would involve more work than getting you off the phone.

Working within those parameters, the best first response is to get them talking. Only **then** do we have something we can work with.

Caution: There are TWO thngs you do NOT want to do at this point:

-We don't want to **argue** with them, or,

-**pitch** how good we are, or what we want to do.

Plus, if they are really satisfied with who they are with, the only way they will even enter a thought process to consider changing is if they begin to think there just might be greener grass on the other side of the fence.

For the first words out of your mouth I suggest a softening statement,

**"Not a problem."**

**"I hear that a lot."**

**"That's OK."**

**"Almost everyone I talk to is already working with someone."**

The softening is important because it is not what is expected, IF they think you are a typical salesperson.

It puts them at ease in a way.

Then comes the question. It can take different forms. A good one is to create questions based on problems they likely still have that competitors don't address as well as you. For example,

**"What do you do in situations where you need same-day delivery on an essential part that is holding up your line?"**

**"How are you dealing with the issue of_____?"**

### The "Backup Plan"

Then there is the "backup plan" question that I have used successfully:

**"What is your Plan B in case of an emergency?"**

**"When stuff hits the fan, what is your contingency?"**

These questions can cause someone to think and say, "What do you mean?"

Precisely. We want them thinking about something that they hadn't before.

### Ask What They Did Previously

Here's another. This is based on the proven premise that it is easier for someone to tell you what they have done before, than what they want.

**"What criteria did you use when you selected them?"**

**"How did they happen to become your main source?"**

And here is another way to possibly plant some doubt:

**"When do you do your annual review to be sure you are getting the best competitive market price?"**

Finally, although this would not be your initial response, but as I have taught for years, at the very minimum you can ask to keep the door open for the future, **after** you have had a brief conversation, and it doesn't appear you'll be moving forward any time soon.

**"Well, if anything ever happened with them, and you were in a bind, would you consider us as a backup if you needed one?"**

### Good Points from the Discussion

OK, back to the original LinkedIn discussion.

There were some good suggestions in the comments that I would approve, that go along with my principles, and would recommend:

**"Hey, I totally get it … I got into this profession to challenge the status quo and help you improve your business. Are you confident enough in your current provider to get a competitive look at the solution?"**

**"If we were able to give you the same, great quality product/service, if not better, and at a lower price, would you be interested in speaking with us at a later date?"** Note: the "later date" is the key here, since it does not ask for the commitment today. If they say yes, then it opens up the dialogue.

**"Many of the strongest and longest client relationships I have started with that exact same sentence."**

**"I appreciate you sharing that with me, XYZ are a very good company to work with. Would you be open to looking at something else that could make your life easier?"** This is very simple, and asking someone "if they are open to looking" is an easy question to answer.

In summary, just because you read it on the Internet does not make it true. In fact, in many cases it is not. Read a lot, for sure. But scrutinize your sources. And you always know you will get good advice here.

# Finding Needs Is Not Enough. Ask "Analysis Questions"

Every sales training session tells you to identify needs, right? You would think that is enough; find some needs, tell them what you can do, and they will buy. You've got the sale, right? NOT!

Some needs are more urgent and important than others. Consequently, some needs get acted upon and others are placed on the back burner. Sales is like that. (So is life, for that matter). And here is why so many reps feel frustration: they identify a need—heck, the customer even acknowledges it—but nothing becomes of it. No sale.

The real trick to making a solid sale is to determine the "depth" and the "weight" of a need. That's why we have **"Analysis"** questions. As the name implies, analysis questions are designed to get the client to explore and analyze their particular needs. By asking the right type of questions, the sales rep can get the customer to not only articulate the need, but also to prioritize it. Once that is done, selling becomes so much simpler. Here's an example of analysis questions to help clients explore the concern.

**Sales Rep: "Mr Leon, you mentioned that you have always had a summer school program. You stated that some were good and some were . . . well . . not so good. Is that correct?"**

***Customer:*** "Yes"

**Sales Rep: "Describe some of those not so good programs. . ."**

***Customer:*** "Oh well, they just weren't what we expected."

**Sales Rep: "I see. Well, what was the impact of these programs on the kids?"**

***Customer:*** "Hmm . . . I hadn't really thought about it. But it wasn't positive of course."

**Sales Rep: "Okay, from another angle: what was the reaction from the parents?"**

***Customer:*** "Well, that's another story. It was kind of grim in some circumstances."

**Sales Rep: "How so?"**

***Customer:*** "This is a parent-paid program. Some of the parents felt they had not really gotten their money's worth."

**Sales Rep: "So, what, if any, impact did that have on subsequent programs?**"

***Customer:*** "As you might expect, enrollment typically dropped."

**Sales Rep: "Dropped? By how much? Say, on a percentage basis?"**

***Customer*:** "Off the top of my head anywhere between 15%-25%."

**Sales Rep: "Sounds significant. In terms of dollars what did that mean?"**

***Customer:*** "Hmm . . . maybe $4000-$5000 in revenues."

**Sales Rep: "Let's take another perspective: How did you make up for the drop in enrollment?"**

**Customer:** "Well, simple really: we intensified our mailings to create more awareness. In a couple of circumstances we paid telephone reps to make calls."

**Sales Rep: "Any idea of how much that cost?**"

**Customer:** "Not at this moment but I see your point. You add the loss of the revenue and the increase in cost in acquisition and, well . . . it is significant."

**Sales Rep: "So, having a powerful and successful summer school program is important just as is avoiding a dud program?"**

***Customer:*** "Yes."

As you can see, analysis questions help explore the situation. From a seemingly unimportant need, the rep got the customer to delve deeper into the situation. As a result, a whole need perspective was created and the need for a solution more sharply defined.

Here's a quick example where a perceived need is minimized:

***Customer*:** "Our major concern is this: if the sales on the Tier 3 account grows, at what point do we pass on the account to field sales?"

**Sales Rep: "That's interesting, Terry. Quick question; why do you have to pass the account on when it is clearly being developed by the inside representative?"**

***Customer:*** "Uh . . . Uh . . . Gee, I don't really know. I guess we've always done it that way thinking the customer gets better service. I never really thought about it but if the customer is growing then he is getting the service."

**Sales Rep: "My thought too. So, is this really a major problem?"**

***Customer:*** "You know what? It isn't!"

Personally, I am convinced that the average client does not really sit down and ponder his or her needs to any great degree. Oh sure, there are exceptions to this statement, but for the most part, clients have not fully thought out the total implications of their problem or opportunity.

The role of the very wise and effective sale rep is to help the client discover the ramifications of a problem or an opportunity. Analysis questions do just that. And the beauty of the whole process is that the customer has gone through a process of "self discovery" which means the issue wasn't thrust upon them by some pushy rep. The customer takes "ownership" of the problem. With ownership comes the commitment to solve the problem or broach the opportunity.

Do not stop with just uncovering a need. Dig deeper with analysis questions and you will see more customer commitment.

*(Jim Domanski is President of the Telemanagement Consulting Group, a telemarketing consulting and training firm. Contact him at 613-591-1998)*

# Here's a Hot Lead. Sorry, Too Late

I was talking to a training prospect who told me they sometimes don't follow up on the leads generated from their website for 2-3 weeks.

Weeks!

That is ridiculous. Why would they even bother having a site and generate traffic?

Inquirers are most interested at the very moment they fill out your form, or call you. Doesn't it make sense to contact these people when their interest is the hottest?

It's tougher than ever today to cut through the noise and capture attention. If you have prospects raising their hands in interest, not contacting them quickly is like flushing piles of cash down the toilet.

At the same time that organizations are sitting on inquiries of various types, their sales reps complain about not being able to reach decision makers.

Some things you just can't make up.

## The Sprinkler Guy

I had an issue with a leaky sprinkler system line in my landscaping. I went to the site, HomeAdvisor.com to list my job and get some bids.

Within 60 SECONDS of hitting "send" I received a call from a contractor, who immediately booked an appointment with me to come out that afternoon. He did a great job, and got paid on the spot.

This was not a huge corporation with a sophisticated telecommunications and software system.

It was a guy in a beat-up truck with a cell phone.

He had a simple system in place to be alerted by email when inquiries were submitted and quickly acted on them.

What's interesting is that while I was on the call with that contractor, I received another call from another bidder. Because he called seconds after the other, he missed out on the job. Snooze, you lose.

## Scientific Proof

There's actually scientific research to back up the common sense and anecdotal evidence.

In a famous study done by Dr. Ken Oldroyd of Northwestern University and InsideSales.com, the results of 100,000 phone calls were analyzed.

Here are just some of the shocking numbers:

✓ The odds of calling to contact a lead decrease by over 10 times in the 1st hour.

✓ The odds of calling to qualify a lead decrease by over 6 times in the 1st hour.

✓ After 20 hours every additional dial your salespeople make actually hurts your ability to make contact to qualify a lead.

✓ The odds of contacting a lead if called in 5 minutes are 100 times higher versus 30 minutes.

✓ The odds of qualifying a lead if called in 5 minutes are 21 times higher versus 30 minutes.

Let me just highlight this again:

If you call a lead back within five minutes of them contacting you (web, phone) your chances are **100 times** higher than if that lead ages *only 30 minutes* or more.

Are you a betting person? I like those odds.

OK, now sit down for this one.

That study was done in 2007!

Just think how much more impatient people are in today's constantly distracted, ADD society where we'll leave a web page in two seconds of we don't get instant gratification.

## Another Study

An excellent Forbes article by Ken Krogue gave further insight into calling leads back quickly, best times to call, etc. Here is some especially useful info from the article:

**1. When you call back quickly, you know where they are.** If they just filled out a web form, they are still by their computer or device, enhancing your chance of reaching them.

**2. When you call back immediately, you are still on their mind.** That fades quickly, so acting quickly is to your benefit.

**3. The "Wow" effect.** Just like with my sprinkler guy, it's impressive when someone gets a call that quickly.

In fact, InsideSales.com built technology to enable a live call within 8-9 SECONDS of a form being filled out Wow, indeed.

So, what is happening with the people who show interest in what you sell? Is there leakage in your lead management, if it even exists?

Granted, everyone reading this might not be able to control this within your organization. But can you influence it?

But for many of you, there are things you can do. If a guy with a truck and a cell phone can, perhaps you can too.

☎

# No One Cares About Your Product or Service Except You

I received an email from a sales rep who said,

*"It's tough for us to prospect and sell by phone. We're a bit different than most other organizations. We sell an intangible: advertising. People can't actually touch or feel our product. It's much more difficult to sell."*

In all fairness to these people, yes, they and others who sell intangibles…insurance, investments, service contracts, software and other services are at a slight disadvantage in that they don't have a physical piece of equipment they can send to the buyer.

Oh, I also regularly hear from people saying,

*"It's tough for us to prospect and sell by phone. We sell a physical product. We need to be there face to face to show and demo it."*

I can empathize with these folks as well.

However, I don't fundamentally agree with either group.

In fact, when anyone puts too much emphasis on the product or service they sell--"the thing" as I refer to it--that's when they get into trouble and actually create resistance and objections.

When you reduce sales to the most fundamental level, everyone is selling the same thing: the results of what your product or service/intangible will do for the buyer. Selling an intangible should be the same as selling a physical product.

And it's usually the sales reps selling products who rely too much on the product itself, and don't sell what people really want to buy: what they get from the product.

### A Quote to Live By

Tweet this one out:

**People don't buy your thing, they buy a picture of the end result, with them in the photo. @ArtSobczak**

As I have mentioned numerous times over the past 30+years, you're not selling benefits; you're selling results.

People are buying the *anticipation* of the good feeling they experience from that new computer that screams through programs in less than half the time as their old dinosaur machine that would force them to twiddle their thumbs and whistle as it lumbered through its gyrations.

When I had a lakehouse and was shopping for a 4-wheel ATV, I asked the sales rep what it was like riding on the sand. He said, "It's a lot of fun."

Technically correct, but not emotional.

After I got one, I could tell you that when you open up that throttle on the sand dunes and race around steeply-banked S curves in an almost sideways position, your heart beats so hard and quickly you can see it through your shirt.

### Create Your Own Emotional Descriptions

Here's an Action Step for you to take: Sit down with fellow reps and have a brainstorming session where you discuss what people experience as a result of buying from you.

Talk in terms of their emotions.

Then come up with analogies and descriptive words, terms, and phrases that help listeners to actually live the experience before they buy from you. Get all the senses involved.

Can they see, feel, touch, taste, or hear the results? If so, how?

Put yourself in the position of the person experiencing the results and create images that are as emotion-evoking as possible.

Associate the emotions with ones you know they have experienced before.

By the way, don't talk about buying from you; focus on them using your product or service.

Nothing beats actually demonstrating a product or service so that prospects can experience the results first hand. In absence of that, however, you can get close by creating those emotions with your words.

Focus on the great feelings they want and expect, and you'll sell more every time. ☎

## Put Them in the Picture

Here's the scenario: You have two stacks of photos dropped on your desk. One is a collection of pictures of a vendor's product, their building, and their employees. The other stack is comprised of photos that have YOU in each one.

Which one do you likely have the most interest in?

Of course, most humans are interested in anything that affects them personally.

The point? When you call a prospect or customer, do you begin by talking about yourself and your company and what YOU want to do? Or do you describe an illustration, putting them in the picture? Remember, people don't care diddly about you and what you want—they want to know how what you have will help them. ☎

# What to Avoid Saying, and What TO Say, to Sell at Full Price

How you position your price can determine whether or not someone questions it and tries to get you to drop it.

Do NOT preface your price with any of these words:

· asking
· suggested
· lowest
· best
· reduced
· quoted
· basic
· usually
· book
· normal
· regular
· typically
· starts out at
· retail

These words trigger in the minds of prospects that you are willing tobring the price down substantially.

This is simply shooting yourself in the foot.

Instead, with confidence, say,

**"The price is..."**

Why?

Because whether they are the CEO or the regular guy down the street,they are getting ready to squeeze a better price out of you.

It's human nature. Everyone wants the best deal. If you give any indication that someone else gets a better price, or that you are open to negotiation, they will seize the opportunity.

I do it. You probably do too.

Every dollar you give away is a dollar directly from the bottom line.

So don't give them a reason to ask, and you will sell at full price more often.

☎

### A Trial Closing Question

When the call is running along smoothly and you detect they're leaning in your favor, take their temperature with, **"What else will you need to make a decision to go with this program?"** The answer will indicate how likely they are to make a positive decision, and what else you'll need to provide to help them do it. Or, it can help smoke out any problems, which also is a good outcome.

### Don't Let the Guarantee Be The Main Reason for Buying

Guarantees are necessary for credibility, but don't sell your guarantee harder than you sell your value. Some reps use the negative sell just to get a "yes," and then later get exactly what they sold: people asking for their money back.

### Ask "What if?"

Ask "What if?" with your prospects and customers.

For example,

**"Mr. Prospect, let's set the money issue aside here for a moment and get crazy. What if you did have this plan in place. What are all the positive effects you would notice?"**

## The Real Secret to Success

While having lunch on an outdoor patio and people watching, it struck me as interesting how people react when they see someone walking a puppy.

They approach the person like an old friend, ooh and ah and just melt.

What's really funny is I saw one of those same people get in her car and flip off another driver who accidentally cut her off in the parking lot.

Why would she—and others--treat a dog more nicely than a human?

Stay with me… there is a sales lesson here.

Gosh, how simplistic can I get? We all know what to do, it's a matter of WANTING to do it.

How about this: Do an "attitude check" before every call you place, and ESPECIALLY the ones you receive, which are interrupting some other activity. Ask yourself, "Am I ready to make this person feel special?"

Keep in mind that your attitude is contagious. As long as you are performing an activity anyway, why not do it with enthusiasm? You'll feel better, and so will the people who hear you. ☎

### 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 operators at the car dealerships he calls into to sell his 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?"**

# How to Get Referrals

Do you have so many referrals that you do not have time to call them all?

Crazy question, I know. Most people have very few referrals. Why? They do not ask for them. And just asking is not enough. You need to ask in the right way to maximize the number, and quality of prospects you receive.

Martyn Hotchkiss was asking for referrals, and regularly meeting a brick wall. Here is what he was saying.

*"Do you know of anyone else who could be interested in our products and services?"*

He'd hear responses like, "Not really," or, "Can't think of anyone at the moment."

And, really, that question invites the easy response from the customer.

Martyn changed his approach and has found more success by "preframing" the question by leading up to it with a short series of closed questions:

**"Mr. Buyer, In your job as ___, you will meet a lot of other people with similar jobs at seminars and conferences, don't you?"**

"Yes"

**"And some of these will have the same sorts of needs as you?"**

"Yes"

**"In fact, you probably discuss these types of products with each other to find out the good ones and the bad ones, don't you?"**

"Yes"

**"Of those people you know, are there any who have been interested in these products?"**

Martyn usually doesn't have to ask who these other people are, because at this point, they are already thinking of them, and the names seem to pop out!

Art Sobczak's

# SMART CALLING REPORT

April 2019 Volume 36 Number 4

# 11 Tips for Advanced Questioning and Discovery

*By Chris Orlob*

Are you looking to set your discovery calls on FIRE?

Well, this might be the most important thing you'll read this year.

You'll see why in a minute.

But first… *A Disclaimer:*

These tips are NOT for beginners.

You have to know the basics of good discovery for these to work. If you don't, you'll misapply them.

If you DO know the basics, **these tips will take you to the next level.**

With that said, let me jump right in and show you the first tip…

## ONE: Discovery is a process, not an event.

It's not a STAGE during the sales cycle. It's an ongoing process.

Your buyer's situation is in flux. If you do "set it and forget it" discovery, your deal will go off the rails.

Right under your nose.

Bad salespeople treat discovery as a "check the box" event.

They have a standard list of questions. They ask them as if they're working their way through a checklist.

AVERAGE reps ask all their questions at the beginning of the call.

They frontload discovery. It's as if they're completing a to-do list of questions before launching into their pitch.

To them, discovery is a static event.

The top performers spread their questions evenly across the call. To them, discovery is an ongoing process, not an event.

*The best discovery doesn't sound like discovery.*

Take notes.

When you "get" discovery is a process (not an event), the natural implication is for you to…

## TWO: Match your questions to the buyer's journey

Your first few questions should respect your prospect's stage in the buying journey. This typically starts with 1. Latent Pain, and then, 2. Active Pain, 3. Solution Development, 4. Evaluation, and, 5. Decision.

Example: If you learn that your buyer is ACTIVELY evaluating products like yours, don't start with this kind of question:

"*What's your biggest strategic priority for this year?*"

That's a *diagnostic* question. Its purpose is to uncover pain, which is appropriate for the first two stages above.

But your buyer is beyond that stage. They're evaluating products. So if you start with this question, you'll irritate them.

Now, I'm not saying DON'T ask that question at all. I'm saying don't start with it (in this case).

Start with questions that respect the buyer's journey stage.

In this case, your buyer is in the *evaluation stage*. So ask them THIS question:

"***What do you hope to achieve by implementing a solution?***"

See the difference?

This question matches the buyer's stage. It's frictionless. It's what the buyer *wants* to talk about.

Once (and only once) you've asked that, can you go back to the first question:

**You: "What are you hoping to achieve by implementing a solution?"**

**Buyer:** "We're looking to increase sales skills."

**You: "Good to know. What's causing you to prioritize that as an initiative?"**

**Buyer:** "Our revenue target has increased, but our marketing budget has not. We've got to do more with less. So, better selling skills is a big part of that answer."

Notice the second question in that dialogue. It goes BACK to the beginning stage of the buyer's journey (pain).

But only once your first question acknowledges that the buyer is already well into their journey. Meet them where they stand.

## THREE: Revalidate everything you uncover.

Never assume that what you learned at the beginning of the sales process remains true.

Priorities change. Buyers' needs are transient.

When things do change, you'd better know about it.

If you followed the first tip, you'll naturally uncover changing buyer priorities.

But if you treat discovery as a "set it and forget it" event, you'll miss your number.

Here's how to revalidate your info. Start every sales meeting with this question:

***(Continued on Page 6)***

# Sales Observations

**I was doing some research for** an online marketing campaign I'm doing, and as often happens, got sidetracked down a rabbit hole of other topics. I landed in a forum for website developers. It was mostly geeks talking geekspeak. But I found someone who had posed a question about actually selling their services and dealing with the "screener's" question, "What's this in reference to?"

I was surprised, because a forum member, another techy-type, responded that he has success with,

"**Claire, typically we help chief executives who are frustrated that although they've spent money on a website, it doesn't generate any leads, it doesn't lead to any sales and they feel like they've been wasting money. I don't suppose Mr Smith has ever mentioned that this is a problem?**"

Wow, that was brilliant! Adapt that using your own problems and benefits.

You never know where you will find inspiration for great sales ideas!

**SMART CALLING REPORT**
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/ Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:


**I always chuckle when I hear** someone say, "I was thinking in my own mind..." Which of course is a good place to do it. Especially on the phone. 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.

**While on a sales call with a training** prospect he said, "There are four important things we teach our sales reps…" You can bet I wrote as quickly as I could to get those down. And then I repeated them to be sure I understood. It might seem obvious, but this made it easy for me to tell him exactly how I would help him. A couple of points here:

-Any time someone mentions numbers, such as, "There are three key areas we need work on…" you need to laser in with your listening.

-If they do not volunteer this info, ask for it: "**What are the three areas you feel you need the most work on?**"

**If you're hit with the "What does** it cost?" question too early, before you've had a chance to justify value, Sherri Tarzwell says she uses this very effective response:

"**Let's verify the product works for you first, then we can figure up the best price.**"

Although this might not be appropriate in all industries and applications, it fits well when there's a relatively complex product or service, or one where there are variables that affect the final price.

**While listening to recordings** from client calls, I heard a prospect say,

"Well, it is not in our budget."

The sales rep responded,

"**That's OK,**"

...then continued with his questioning, pretty much ignoring the statement.

And he got the sale!

Two important points here.

First, his reaction was like the Mexican beach vendors in Cabo walking up to everyone they see and asking for the sale:

"Sunglasses Senor?"

No.

"These would look good on you."

They act as if they didn't even hear the no, then they continue. You can do the same.

Next, regarding the budget issue. If you are looking for new business, in many cases what you are calling about will NOT be in their budget.

And it doesn't matter.

If you are talking to the right person, and if they perceive your value as high enough, they find the money.

Now go and make this your best month ever!

Art

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# When It Is Time to Go Home, Make One More Call

*By Jeb Blount*

I don't remember where I found the eleven words that changed my sales career. I think I may have stumbled on them in a newsletter or magazine I subscribed to back when newsletters were mailed rather than emailed. *(Art's Note: It was probably this one. We have published that suggestion several times over the years.)*

What I do remember is the words instantly resonated with me:

**When it's time to go home, make one more call.**

I cut the blurb out of the newsletter and taped it over my desk where I would see it each day.

It was always the last thing I looked at before I hit the streets to go on my sales calls.

Those words became my mantra.

On days when I was dragging my ass because I'd had it handed to me by prospects I couldn't close; or, it was hot, cold, raining, or snowing; or, I was tired, worn-out, burned-out, or, jonesing to go home early on a Friday afternoon; or when I was coming up with really good justifications to knock off early for the day, this mantra, "when it is time to go home, make one more call," kept me going for one more call (and sometimes two, three, or four).

It kept me focused on paying for my success, in advance, with hard work.

The impact of those extra calls was mind blowing. So many of my "one more calls" turned into sales. It was as if the universe was rewarding me for sticking to it. That final push paid off and kept paying off in my performance and my paycheck.

Five more calls a week, resulted in 20 additional calls a month, resulted in 240 additional calls a year.

At a 34% closing rate that produced an additional 82 deals a year, almost $2 million in incremental revenue, and, an extra $100k in my pocket – income I would never have generated if I had not developed the discipline to make one more call.

That, by the way, is called **Sales Gravy.**

Over the years I've shared this mantra with the sales professionals who've worked for me and I continue to share it with the new generation of sales professionals I teach and coach.

Some adopt it as their own, others ... go home.

I get hundreds of calls, text messages, and emails each year on Friday afternoons or near dark from top tier sales pros that say things like this:

*"Hey Jeb, you are not going to believe this. I was about to give up but decided to make one last call and the guy bought from me right on the spot. Can you believe that???"*

This kind of sales serendipity happens every day across the globe to the sales pros that are fanatical about making one more call.

Of course there are those who will tell you that this is bunk. They'll argue that working harder is stupid. "Why work harder when you can work smarter?" they somehow say with a straight face.

Here is a brutal truth:

"Working smarter" is the hobgoblin of mediocre salespeople.

Like all losers, they use "working smarter" as an excuse for their lack of achievement. Trust me on this, losers love company so they are happy to lure you into their "working smarter" camp with the Siren song of less effort for more results.

Do not buy into this bull.

Top sales professionals have the self-discipline to do the hard things in sales.

Do these top performers get tired, cold, hungry, burned out, and feel their resolve wavering and want to give up and go home? Of course they do.

Do these top performers love prospecting or the other difficult activities required for success in sales? Of course not! They don't enjoy these activities anymore than the salespeople who are failing.

What top performers in sales (and frankly all walks of life) understand is that to succeed at the highest level they've got to pay for their success in advance with hard work, sacrifice, doing things they hate, and making one last, final push over the finish line.

The salespeople on the bottom know this too but, instead of making one more call at the end of the day when it is time to go home, they make excuses.

When it is time to go home, make one more call!

*(Jeb Blount advises many of the world's leading organizations and their executives on the impact of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills on customer experience, strategic account management, sales, and developing high performing sales teams. He speaks to and delivers training to high-performing sales teams across the globe. 1-888-360-2249)*

# Voice Mail Tactics: Getting People to Listen and Respond

**"Jim, most sales consultants are not nearly as successful as they could be because they fail to leverage the media and maximize their use of PR."**

This was the voice mail I got just recently after a trip to Chicago.

There was no preamble, no introduction of who was calling. It broke the rules that I typically preach about leaving an effective voice mail.

'How dare this guy,' I said, as I listened to the message further.

**"Jim, my name is Chris Grayburn and I am with MediaLev. I have some ideas that might help you use PR more effectively to generate more awareness and more business. Could you please give me a call at xxx-xxxx."**

I sat for a moment or two critically judging the voice mail.

And then, slowly a smile crept across my face as I began to realize that the message caught my attention.

Of the eight messages in my voice mailbox, this one got me hook, line and sinker. Because the rep did not start off in a traditional manner introducing himself and his company I was caught off guard.

So I tuned in. I listened. And I learned.

## Break the Rules

I learned several things that quickly humble me. First and foremost, I learned that sometimes you just gotta break the rules.

I learned that you have to be willing to try new tactics even if they seem a bit unorthodox.

For years I have been preaching a Four-Step Approach to leaving a voice mail message. These steps are:

1. State your full name

2. State your company name

3. Provide an intriguing statement with implied benefits

4. Conclude with an action statement (e.g., leave your phone number)

These steps have served me and others well.

But the trouble is, EVERY sales rep is learning these steps. These messages are starting to sound the same. Buyers are getting savvy. They have heard this approach before. In short, the market is getting saturated with the same type of message and it is hard to distinguish them.

So ultimately, I learned that I had created my own little "box" or comfort zone, and to use an old cliché, I learned I have to "think out of the box."

## How to Make it Work for You

Chris Grayburn, changed the rules. Just a bit, but just enough. He used the Four-Step approach as I described above but he changed the order. He began with an intriguing opening statement and then followed up with an introduction of himself, his company and a request for me to call.

## How to Create an Intriguing Start-Off Statement

This is the tough part and of course, the key to the success of the voice mail.

Start by analyzing your product or service. You must look closely at your product or service and decide what *problem* it solves or what unique *opportunity* it might provide to your listener. This is the key! Problems and opportunities are what motivate buyers to take action. This is called a USP or "unique selling proposition." You must know your USP and you must know how to position it.

Then you must craft a message that leverages the opportunity or the problem. Position it as a statement or a question. Chris might have said,

**"Jim, are you getting the type of PR that drives sales into your business?"**

That would have worked too. Play with your statements or questions. Try to keep them short. Most buyers do not have time to listen to long-winded, self serving messages from vendors. It's not easy to come up with the right mix of words so learn to test them. Leave twenty or thirty voice mails with one message and monitor the results. See how many callbacks you receive. Then try a new voice message. Monitor and compare the results against one another. Which did better? Try another if necessary. Be curious. Have some fun with it.

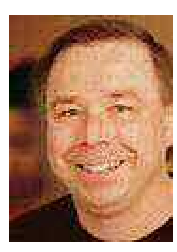
In Chris's case, he left me with a double whammy. I was curious why sales consultants are not as successful as they could be, while at the same I wanted to know how I could cash in on public relations. It was irresistible.

**TIP:** Use your prospect's name at the beginning of the message. It caught my attention and got me to listen closely because I thought it was a message from someone I knew.

**TIP 2:** When testing a new voice mail message, rehearse it out loud many, many times, working on your delivery. Vary your tone. Sound natural. Then, call your OWN voice mail and leave the message. Wait a while. Then listen to it over the phone. Take notes on the content and delivery. Make changes where necessary.

## Summary

Check out your voice mail message. Is it routine? Does it need an overhaul? If so, try Chris's approach. I know I am.



*(Jim Domanski is President of the Telemanagement Consulting Group, a telemarketing consulting and training firm. Contact him at 613-591-1998)*

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# Persuasive Messaging in a TV Commercial

I find that most TV commercials are an insult to our intelligence. Many are just plain stupid. I've never really understood how companies can spend millions on a commercial—and hundreds of millions per year—and not be able to definitely measure ROI, since they don't have direct response calls to action.

And just as bad, you might see a clever or funny commercial, but not remember the company, product, or brand. (Like with many uber-expensive Super Bowl ads.)

Anyway, one commercial that caught my eye and ears while watching golf was from Fisher Investments, one of the largest financial advisory firms in the country.

It piqued my curiosity so much I had to rewind, watch it three times, and take notes.

The sales messaging and psychology was brilliant.

The relevance for us is that you can adapt or copy their messaging and psychology to use in your own calls and written communication.

### The Commercial

First, if you'd like to watch the actual ad, just Google, *"We Do Better When You Do Better Fisher Investments."*

The gist of the message is that it compares Fisher to other advisors, without mentioning them by name. Fisher is positioned as a group of caring professionals who have your best interest in mind. Other advisors are portrayed as the typical product-pushing, commission-hungry stockbrokers.

The commercial starts with a split screen, with similar-looking financial advisors in suits, standing next to mature-aged clients,

The voiceover starts,

**"All money managers might seem the same, but..."**


This is a great way to address an objection from the get-go.

It continues with,

**"Other money managers just give cookie cutter portfolios. Fisher gives tailored portfolios to your goals and needs."**

This appeals to the desire of wanting to be treated as an individual instead of a number, object, or commodity. And it differentiates Fisher without mentioning any other competitor, something you can do as well.

Next,

**"Some call only when they have something to sell. Fisher calls regularly so you stay informed."**

This plays on the perception that financial planners are like The Wolf of Wall Street, or Bud from the movie, "Wall Street," calling to sell junk investments to earn commissions.

It uses the Theory of Contrast beautifully, contrasting calling to sell you something, with calling regularly so you stay informed. If you think about this, they have actually managed to position receiving a phone call from a financial advisor as something positive, because you are being educated. Genius.

Then,

**"Some advisors are happy to earn commissions whether you do well or not (graphic of "Hidden Fees" on screen), Fisher's fees are structured so that we do better when you do better."**

Again, this appeals to the emotions fairness, and not being taken advantage of. Most people are skeptical of salespeople who are on a commission. Even though the word "fee" is used, and most often is perceived negatively, they again paint it as a positive, saying that they only benefit handsomely when you do.

It ends with,

**"Maybe that is why most of our clients come from other money managers."**

Boom. That's the ultimate slam on other money managers. It uses social proof. It's credible because it's a fact.

One way to use this last principle is when someone tells you they already work with one of your competitors. A good response could be, **"Not a problem. Actually, most of my clients right now came from other money managers.**

Analyze these techniques and see if they are appropriate to work into your own messaging.

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*(Continued from cover page)*

"**What's changed since the last time we talked?**"

### FOUR: Phrase your questions to get LONG answers.

Don't you HATE it when buyers answer your questions with one-word responses?

It sucks.

And guess what? According to our data, successful salespeople get LONG answers to their questions:

There's a strong link between buyers' response lengths and closed deals.

Here's how to do that:

SIGNAL to your buyer that you want a long response. Do that by phrasing your questions the right way.

Start with your basic *who, what, when, where, why,* or *how* question.

Got one?

Now, start your question with one of these phrases:

**"Can you help me understand...?"**

**"Can you walk me through...?**

**"Can you tell me about...?"**

**"Talk to me about..."**

For example:

**"What's your biggest challenge?" becomes "Can you help me understand your biggest challenge?"**

This phrasing signals that you want your buyer to answer *in depth*. You'll get richer answers that help you close deals.

### FIVE: Say these three "magic" words.

If you tried the last tip, you've got your buyer *talking.*

That's GREAT!

Here's how to keep them talking so you can learn even more.

When they've finished responding to your question, do this:

·Repeat the main 1-3 words your customer used in their response.

·Do it with an upward voice tone, like you're asking a question.

Like this:

**Buyer:** "*We're losing deals to competitors. Our product is strong, but our reps back peddle when customers ask how we're different.*"

**Sales rep: "Back peddle?"**

**Buyer:** "*Yes. They don't respond with a crisp, strong answer. They stumble. And their answers are inconsistent.*"

**Sales rep: "Inconsistent?"**

**Buyer:** "*Yeah, that's another problem we have. I have 70 sales reps running 70 different sales processes …* "

This technique is called *mirroring*. Chris Voss popularized it. When you do it right, you open up the floodgates.

The key is to repeat your *buyers' own words* back to them. Not your words. And then *stop talking.*

Pair it with the other techniques you're learning here. Your buyer will tell you things that help you close the deal.

### SIX: Use "commercial-grade" listening.

Alrighty! You've asked a great question. You've kept your mouth shut. And you've mirrored your buyer.

Your next step is to *label* your buyer's emotions.

When you notice your buyer getting emotional, *label* that emotion. Complete one of these sentences to do it:

**"It seems like you___"**

**"It sounds like you___"**

**"It looks like you ___"**

The "blank" is for an accurate label of the emotion your buyer expressed.

This is another Chris Voss technique.

An example might sound like this:

**Buyer:** "*It's a TON of work to onboard new sales reps. Creating the training material is bringing our enablement department to its knees.*"

**You: "It sounds like you feel overwhelmed every time a new onboarding class starts."**

**Buyer:** "*I do! I feel a sense of dread every Sunday night before the work week starts.*"

If you labeled their emotion right, you did something *magic*. You made your buyer feel *deeply* understood. The key is to shut your mouth after you've voiced your label. (Haven't I said that already!?!)

Let your buyer talk uninterrupted. They'll love you for it.

If you're face to face, you'll notice their body language change dramatically. It will look like you *breathed life* into them.

### SEVEN: Ask questions based on what your buyer just said.

Don't start a new thread with every question.

Go deep. Base your next question on what your buyer *just told you*.

Your questions should feel spontaneous.

When you DON'T take this approach, it seems like you're sticking to an annoying line of questioning. It doesn't feel like a *natural* conversation.

Instead, ask your questions as a *follow-up* to what your customer said. It's what successful salespeople do:

**Sales rep: "Can you help me understand where you lose deals most often in your sales process?"**

**Buyer:** "*After they see a product demo. The buyer gets excited. But then they have the daunting task of getting their VP scheduled for a call with us. Weeks go by. We follow up. And then never hear back.*"

*(Continued on next page)*

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**Sales rep: "Interesting. What would you need to change in order to prevent that from happening?"**

This is grossly oversimplified. But it illustrates the point.

**Your second question shouldn't start a new thread.** It should go deeper into an issue the buyer raised.

### EIGHT: Ask questions only an expert could ask.

You know the saying, "There's no such thing as a dumb question." It doesn't apply in sales!

There are *plenty* of dumb questions. Many of which can bomb your credibility.

The best questions you can ask are ones that only an *expert* would ask. They're questions that make your buyer *think* rather than just recite information.

They signal to your buyer that you're *a competent professional they can trust.*

Here's an example.

When I was a sales rep, I often asked this question:

**"Can you walk me through your sales process, from when you first generate a new lead, through to a closed deal?"**

The wording of that question matters.

It signals a level of seriousness and expertise. You're about to *dig deep* with your buyer.

Compare that question with the trite, *"What's your sales process?"*

Even though they ask the same thing, only one demonstrates expertise. The other one shows a sophomoric lack of preparation.

### NINE: Ask the "sweet spot" number of questions

There's a *sweet spot* for how many questions you should ask during a sales call.

That number is between 11 and 14:

If you ask *too many* questions, the conversation will feel like an interrogation. Too few, and you won't unearth enough pain.

WARNING! … those numbers don't apply when you're selling to a C-Suite executive.

They're a different animal. They have *little* patience for too many questions.

When you're selling to the C-Suite, your win rates drop after asking a small handful of questions:

In fact, successful meetings with C-suite executives have only four questions on average. Unsuccessful meetings have eight:

That's because senior executives have "discovery fatigue."

### TEN: Keep your "talk-to-listen ratio" in the right range.

The best salespeople talk for 46% of their sales calls (on average). They leave 54% of the talking time to the customer.

Maintaining the right talk-to-listen ratio is so obvious that it should be the first tip.

So, why isn't it?

**Because it's a byproduct of doing everything else right.**

Talking for 46% of a call isn't going to magically help you close deals.

But if you follow the *other* tips in this post, you'll *end up* with this ratio (more or less).

At the very least, stay in the recommended RANGE.

Don't go ABOVE 65%, which is where you start to lose deals.

Keep tabs on this stat. It matters, especially when it gets too high.

### ELEVEN: Turn on your webcam.

Why is this is a DISCOVERY call tip?

Because it's ***more important*** to turn on your webcam during discovery calls than during other types of calls.

Why? Because other types of calls *already have a visual backdrop for the conversation:*

·Demo calls have a product demo.

·Presentations have a visual slide deck

Discovery calls are *mano y mano*: you and the buyer.

If you don't have your webcam on, your buyer has nothing to look at. And they're more likely to grow tired of your questions (or act rudely).

Closed deals involve using webcams 41% *more* often than lost deals, accoding to our research.

When the buyer sees your face, the call becomes more human. More conversational. It brings life to everything you say.

It helps your buyer believe you're driven by curiosity, rather than checking boxes in a to-do list of questions.

Here's what to do next…

PHEW!

That brings us to the end.

Do you want the tips you learned here to stick?

Download our FREE cheat sheet.

It summarizes the key points of great discovery calls.

**Get it for free here.**
https://pages.gong.io/discovery-calls-guide/

*(Chris Orlob is Senior Director of Product Marketing at Gong.io, a conversation intelligence platform for coaching sales and service calls.)*

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### Are You Putting in Time, or Making an Investment?

If you rent an apartment, you're spending money on rent. But if you own your house or condo, you're investing in your own property. Likewise if you take or place every call in a mechanical fashion without learning from each one, you're just spending time. However, when you stop and reflect at the conclusion of each call, you're building "knowledge equity." You're getting a return on your time investment. This is knowledge you can use on future calls. After every call ask yourself, **1. "What did I like about this call?"**, and, **2."What would I have done differently on this call?"** This simple activity helps you to shore up your stronger points, and strengthen your weaker ones.

### Close With Confirming Questions

Here are some conversational trial closing questions you could use after making a point, or answering a question or objection:

**"It's a pretty good offer . . . . what do you think?"**

**"Are you feeling more sure about that now?"**

**"Based on what you know so far, how do you feel about the product?"**

**"Does that sound better than you expected?"**

### Ask Them for a Solution

If the other person has refused to accept any of your concessions or alternatives, throw the decision back into his court, says Dianna Booher, in her book, "Communicate With Confidence," (McGraw-Hill). **"OK, I've run out of ideas. How do you think we can work out this issue/overcome this objection/diffuse this concern?"** The other person often has a suggestion in mind that is workable. In some cases, he might concede that the issue is unsolvable and as a result, drop it as a criterion for coming to an agreement.

### Don't Use Threatening Questions

Try to avoid wording questions about the competition like this, *"What don't you like about your present supplier?"*, or, *"What are the weaknesses of your vendor?"* Those questions could be interpreted as an insult to their decision-making ability, since they chose the vendor in the first place. A less threatening query would be, **"In what areas could your existing level of service be improved upon?"**, or, **"What would you like to get that you might not be receiving now?"**

### Phases to Avoid

When prospecting, avoid saying, *"I was just going through my records (or list) here,"* and, *"We're calling people in your area . . . "* They don't want to feel as if they're just one of the names on the list you grabbed that day.

### Expand Your Customers

Do any of your customers—even the very best ones—buy everything you sell? Is there the chance they might be buying elsewhere some of the same products you sell? Probably. If you sell to regular customers on a regular basis, set a goal on every call to ask several questions designed to determine whether the customer could benefit from other products/services you have. **"Sandy, many of our customers who now get ______ from us also find there are a few other very compatible items that they get as well. Tell me, what additional types of . . ."**

### How to Move Indecisive Prospects

You can take a hesitant prospect and actually use his/her own indecisiveness as a way to prompt them to act. For example, **"Jan, I understand this is a major decision. And one thing to consider is this: What will happen if you leave things the way they are? We discussed that you're missing sales opportunities every day. What will that mean to you in terms of lost revenue just over the next six months?"**

Art Sobczak's

SMART CALLING REPORT

May 2019 Volume 36 Number 5

# Have the Attitude of this Jepoardy Winner

The guy who is on the amazing Jeopardy game show run.

*"Who is James Holzhauer?"*

At the time of writing this, he was about to eclipse the previous money-winnings record holder, Ken Jennings, of $2.5 million.

Except Holzhauer will likely do it in just 33 games. It took Jennings 74.

Holzhauer will eventually get beat—it might take a while.

What I want to talk about, and what is relevant for you, is a person you probably have never heard of. The person who beat Jennings:

Nancy Zerg.

She likely wasn't any better or smarter than Jennings. In fact, she lost the very next game, leaving her personal streak at one.

To beat Jennings, she managed to stay close during the main part of the game, then knew the last answer when Ken didn't. Game and streak over.

She had something else going for her at the time that certainly didn't hurt.

Confidence.

In interviews after her victory, she said that she knew he would lose to someone eventually, and it just as well should be her.

In contrast, she spoke to other contestants who before their games with Ken were already resigned to the fact that they would lose. They said things like,

"Coming in second to Ken Jennings isn't bad."

And sure enough, they came in second.

Or third.

So what is your mindset before your calls? Do you pick up the phone feeling that you're going to succeed? Or, are you expecting the worst?

We tend to look for, create, and get what we expect. Let's look at some ways to avoid the negatives and stay positive.

### Don't Assume Negatives

Too often sales reps assume the worst before a call, and then let that attitude come through in their voice on the call.

Their assumption becomes reality. For example,

"I know you're busy so I won't take too much of your time …"

EVERYONE is busy. If what you have is of value, you earn their time, and they'll want to speak with you.

"I imagine you get lots of stuff emailed to you and probably haven't had a chance to look at my material yet …"

Instead, tell them that you are calling to review the material that you have sent them as a result of your previous call.

If that call was strong, and they agreed to look at your material and do something with it, you should expect that on the follow-up call.

### Don't Validate Their Resistance

When a prospect or customer gives resistance, don't put words in their mouth to validate the resistance. Make them do it themselves. For example, I heard this on a call

Prospect (tentatively) "So we probably won't be doing this with you in the short term …"

Caller "Oh, so you're really not in a position to do it now?"

Prospect: "Yeah, … right, we're really not in a position to do it now."

The rep then said, "Can I call you back in about three months?", and the prospect said sure.

And why not?

The caller made it so easy! Instead, the rep should have remained silent after the initial resistance, since there might not have been much substance behind it.

It's interesting how, when people aren't telling the complete truth, feel compelled to keep talking when confronted with silence. If the prospect didn't volunteer further information, the caller could have said, "Oh, what led to that conclusion?"

This way, the caller finds out if the prospect is serious, or is simply brushing off the caller.

Don't go into a call expecting resistance. If you must expect anything, expect success. And if you doubt anything, doubt your limitations.

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# Sales Observations

**I was picking up my to-go** lunch order at a Chinese restaurant.

I asked if soup came with the order.

The woman at the counter told me that they did not have soup to go with the lunch specials, just for dining in.

I really wanted some hot and sour soup.

*"So how can I get soup?"*

She pointed to the menu and said all they had was the big container for two, for six dollars.

I thought I'd get creative and make a logical suggestion:

*"How about just filling it half-way, making it for one, and charging me half-price?"*

She smiled and said,

**"The soup is for two and is $6."**

I bought it.

Wow, what a great example of simply standing firm on price.

How do you respond when asked if you can do better on price?

**If you're faced with the resistance** of "We can get it cheaper online," a good strategy is to not get into a price discussion, but rather get them thinking and talking about what they really want, which many times is not included when purchasing online. For example,

**"Of course most things can be simply purchased online for lower prices. But let's look at everything that you really want...**"

**Speaking of price, in my archives** I found somewhat of an unconventional way to deal with a higher price in the book, *"When the Other Guy's Price is Lower,"* by James Bleech and David Mutche (that was according to my notes. I can't find the book in my library, or the book on amazon. Anyway, that was my source.)

When your price is higher, mention it early in a call or relationship:

**"Our product is one of the higher-priced in the market. Is that a reason for us to stop talking?"**

If the prospect says he wants to continue, then ask,

**"Why is that?"**

This gives you great information. If he says he does not want to continue, ask for a further explanation. You might be able to deal with it, but if not, at least you get this person out of the way early and avoid wasting time.

**Are you ever asked for references?**

And do people actually *contact* them when they're given? Many don't. Often, they want to see if you have them, how you react when you're asked for them, and what types of references you're able to produce, wanting to be sure you've worked with companies similar to theirs.

The next time you're asked, respond matter-of-factly with,

"Sure, I'll be happy to provide references. What would you like to see?"

Get them to explain why they're asking. This can help you immediately provide additional information and answers to questions, which, in some cases, might negate the need to provide the references.

You should, however, always be prepared to provide plenty.

**It's alarming how multi-tasking** obsessed people are today. Which means they are not doing ANY of those tasks with 100% focus.

And that includes listening.

A sales pro at a recent workshop told me he closes Slack, Skype, email, Facebook, and all other windows and apps not directly related to his calling, and puts his cell phone in a drawer, turned off. Awesome.

Here's something else that struck me while I was on a call with a person who had a thick accent. I had to listen with everything I had to comprehend what he was saying. And I thought, why not do that on EVERY call?

Now go and make this your best month ever!

Art

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**SMART CALLING REPORT**
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:

# Help Them Experience Ownership

Have you ever purchased a TV, couch, bed, or car without trying it out first?

How people buy some things like those online without trying it first is beyond me.

For the most part, we buy because we experience the feeling of, or see the picture of the result of owning and using the product or service.

The closer you can get to helping prospects experience that, the better.

On the phone, the ultimate in skill is doing that solely with our words. But, if you can use other tools available to you, why not?

For example, I received a prospecting call from an online printing service. He did a nice job of grabbing interest at the beginning by referencing a colleague who provided my name as a referral.

Then he mentioned a value statement, saying how he works with other trainers, helping them save time in the printing of their training manuals and having them delivered directly to the clients' locations.

After a good job of questioning, he took me to their site where we uploaded an actual training manual that I used with a client. He walked me through how easy it was to submit and format the file for printing.

Easy indeed.

Then, he had the manual overnighted to me to demonstrate the speed. Impressive. And, I held the physical product in my hands, seeing and feeling the better quality than what I was paying for. I was sold.

He hadn't even given me the pricing yet, but in my mind it was worth more than what I was paying because of everything I had experienced. I had experienced ownership in advance.

How can you do something similar?

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# This is Why Calls Wander Aimlessly

Last month I shared with you the brilliance in a TV commercial for Fisher Investments. I saw another financial services commercial, this one for an online brokerage. One guy asked another,

"Does your brokerage house give you objective advice?"

"Yeah, their objective always is to sell me something."

Of course that was meant to be a humorous slam on full-service brokers whose intent is to sell stocks instead of give objective advice.

However, it got me thinking about how lots of sales reps do NOT have a clear objective when they pick up the phone.

### These are NOT Primary Objectives

For example, when I ask reps for objectives before calls I hear such things as,

"I want to see who they're buying from now."

"I'd like to qualify and send out some info."

"Want to see if they have any needs."

Granted, all of those should be accomplished, but none are the end RESULT you're ideally looking for on a call.

You wouldn't get in your car and say, "I'm going to start my car, and then just go out on the road somewhere."

No, you get in your car because you have a very specific destination in mind. And when you have a destination, then you figure out what route you need to take in order to get there. Then you follow that route. And usually you arrive.

Yet, many sales reps get on the phone with no clear, specific destination in mind. Then they end up cruising aimlessly, and not surprisingly, ending their wayward journey without a pleasing result.

Maybe you've had that feeling after a call. Where you sit there shaking your head, thinking, "What just happened on that call? I was all over the place."

This week's Tip is boring, simple, but yet required for success:

Have a Primary Objective before each call.

### Primary Objective Defined

I define your Primary Objective as what you want them to DO as a result of the call.

Again, emphasis on the DO. It must be action-oriented.

The ultimate Primary Objective is to get them to buy on this call.

Perhaps your objective is to "Get agreement that the customer will take your proposal to the board meeting and recommend its approval."

Maybe you want to qualify, generate interest, and get the prospect to agree to do a side-by-side comparison between his existing product and yours.

Look at these again. They all involve your prospect/customer DOING something.

And think big. One thing's for sure: if you aim low, you'll rarely hit above your target. When you aim high, you'll sometimes reach it, and on average, will achieve greater results than if you start low.

So here's your homework: For every call you place from here on out, simply ask, "What do I want this person to DO as a result of this call?" That's your Primary Objective.

And when you have your end target in mind, it's much easier to plot your map, and ultimately arrive at the target.

As Dr. Steven Covey says in his "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," begin with the END in mind.

☎

# How to Really Listen Your Way to More Sales

Listening can be tough. It can be even tougher in the absence of face-to-face contact. Listening, however, remains the key to establishing a "relationship" with your clients. As the customer begins to perceive you understand his world, relationships grow and sustain themselves. Here are some tips and ideas on how to improve your listening skills:

## How *Not* to Listen

**1. "I know this stuff."** Sometimes pre-call planning can work against you. Yes, you read that correctly. Occasionally reps overprepare. Specifically, they feel they know so much about the client or the prospect that it builds a false sense of security.

Consequently, when a client begins to provide information there is a tendency to say to yourself "I know that already." It is not so much that we entirely dismiss the comments by the customer but rather we listen at 50%. We miss perspective. And when we miss the client's perspective we cannot fully comprehend their world.

**2. "I can hardly wait to tell you that I know this stuff."** Similarly, there is a tendency when we overprepare to anxiously show the client how much we know. We want to impress her with our preparation. In this scenario we are waiting for the moment to tell the client what we know rather than listen to what she has to say.

**3. "Let me tell you even more."** Sales reps are taught to listen for buying cues. Unfortunately, some reps simply wait for the cue so that they can use the opportunity to make their pitch. This is selective listening. There is a tendency to hear what we want to hear and then switch into the pitch mode. From that point on we stop listening.

## What to Do

**1. Take notes.** Nothing new or exciting about this tip. However, it still remains the most powerful way to listen, particularly when you are not face-to-face with the client. Taking notes forces you to concentrate on what the client has to say. It eliminates distractions around you because your head is focused on the paper. As you take notes, you have less of an opportunity to prepare rebuttals and pitches as described above. Incidentally tell the prospect or client you are taking notes. They won't mind. In fact, most will be impressed if not pleased:

**"Ms. Fontaine, I'll be taking some notes so I can assess your situation and not miss anything."** Telling them that you are taking notes also preps the client that he or she might have to slow down or repeat themselves. For example:**"Mr. Maher, I didn't quite get that last bit of information concerning your use of trocars in surgery. I'm afraid my short hand needs a little work. Could you go over that again?"**

**2. Ask Questions.** Again, no surprises here. Asking questions, of course, is the means of getting the client to speak. And that provides us the opportunity to listen. There are several "generic"' questions that can assist in getting the client to open up. For instance;

**"Bob, I'm not quite sure what you meant by that last remark..."**

**"Could you elaborate..."**

**"Explain how that works..."**

**"Can you go over that again ..."**

**3. Provide a "playback."** No amount of note taking and questioning will guarantee that you have listened or that you have listened and understood. The only way you can do this is by providing a playback or summary of what you have heard to your client:

**Sales Rep: "So, Danny, let's see if I have got this straight: You want to expand your market share by penetrating the hospitals into the northeast but you have yet to find the personnel to implement the plan. The strategy is further hampered by the fact that you are virtually an unknown player in this area. Is this correct?"**

Note: It is vital that you simply don't repeat word for word what the client has said. That's "parroting." You must summarize and interpret.

One of three interesting things can happen when you provide feedback. First, the client can confirm what you have played back: "That's it, Ben. You've hit it right on the head."

Second, the client can correct or modify your play back: "That's not quite right, Ben. We do have two sales reps in the northeast already. Their focus has been only on the hospitals in Boston."

Third, the client can add more information: 'Well, Ben, that summarizes it. I should also mention that we have the exclusive rights to the Graseby Pump from England. Typically, the pump can help reduce post operative costs by 30-40%. Surgeons and hospitals are constantly looking for ways to reduce these costs. We have proven results and testimonials from Europe and here in the mid-West."

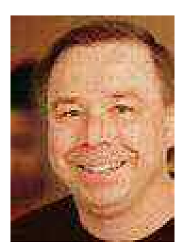
**Sales Rep: "So you see the pump as a unique means of penetrating the market despite the fact that your company is not well known. Am I getting the picture?"**

"Precisely."

Note the use of the last question. Don't be afraid to ask for confirmation. Phrases like **"How does that sound?"** or **"Do I have it right?"** or **"Am I on the right track?"** or **"Is that correct on my part?"** help check your listening.

In summary, while listening, you get to know the customer and their world. But another curious thing occurs. As you demonstrate your listening skills, the client gets to know you and your world. And the customer concludes you are reliable, trustworthy, and professional. That's what relationships are made of.

Good selling.



*(Jim Domanski is President of the Telemanagement Consulting Group, a telemarketing consulting and training firm. Contact him at 613-591-1998)*

## Being Hesitant Can Help You Move Forward

I heard this technique on a call with an assistant.

Assistant: “Bob Jones’ office. This is Kate.”

Rep: **“Hey Kate. I’m not sure I should be calling here… hopefully you can tell me.”**

Assistant: “Umm, ok.”

Then he proceeded to explain who he was, and the problem he solved (not the product he sold) and asked, **“Is that something Bob is responsible for, or does someone else handle that?”**

Several things going on here. The assistant was disarmed a bit when the rep said he wasn’t sure he should be calling there, and then he used the tried and true technique of asking for help. It was now as if they were solving a mystery together.

And then after describing the problem he solves, he asked the alternate choice question, which in either case would give a useable answer (in this case it was Bob).

You could also use a variation of this with the decision maker, regardless of whether you already know he/she is the person you should be speaking with.

For example,

**“Hi Bob, Dan Jacobs with Excel Services. First, I’m not sure if I should be calling you. I work with companies that (describe the problem you solve) and help them to (describe the result of solving the problem). Is that something you are responsible for, or is someone else in charge of that?**”

It’s an unconventional approach, but certainly could accomplish our opening statement objective of getting them curious and in a positive state of mind, while moving them to the questioning.



## Are You Doing Things to Prevent Sales?

I went to the Dollar Store to get a specific-sized tin foil pan I needed for some cooking I was doing for a party. I took it to the checkout, expecting to pay my quick buck and get out of there. The clerk had difficulty scanning it and called over a manager who didn’t appear too happy she was forced to get out of her chair in her office.

She tried scanning it a few times, punched some buttons on the screen, then threw it down and said it wasn’t in the computer, they couldn’t sell it. Then she walked away.

The clerk looked at me with a puzzled face. So I went over grabbed another one, waited my turn in line—again. She tried scanning it again. No luck.

The manager definitely was not happy about having to get up again in a span of five minutes. She tried scanning it again. She threw that one down and said, “I told you we can’t sell these.”

I was floored. And then started laughing.

“How about I just give you a five dollar bill. You keep the change, and then just figure it out later.”

She snapped back, “No. We can’t sell them.”

And then she walked away.

So much for “finding a way” and solving problems.

That manager should be fired.

This isn’t a sales point so much as a sales *prevention* example.

If you do a completely honest and transparent evaluation, are there any policies and practices—personal or organizational—and personal habits that you control that hinder people from buying from you.

This is one of the easiest areas—in theory—to fix.

Awareness must be the first step.



## Find Out Why They Asked the Question

We often hear questions that are tough, catch us off guard, or are off-the-wall and irrelevant. A strategy for all of these is to get them to continue talking. This buys you time, helps them further explain their reason for the question, or unmasks the fact that the question has no point.

For example,

Their Question: “How many programs have you done in my industry?”

Your possible questions:

**“Are you asking because you’re wondering about our ability to handle your types of issues?”**

**“Just kind of curious. Why are you asking?”**

**“Is experience one of your main concerns?”**

**“When you say ‘your industry,’ what specifically are you referring to?”**

**“Not sure I understand. Could you explain?”**

Of course, be sure your reply makes sense.

### Move Them Forward

Good question to begin wrapping up the details and moving the process forward: **“What do we need to do first?**

### A Common Problem

**Problem:** Sales rep talking too much at the beginning of a call.

**Result and Implications:**

• talking himself out of a sale.

• Giving information that is irrelevant, boring the listener, or, worse, giving ammunition for an objection.

**Solution:** Be sure to get information before you give it.

# Ask Questions Like This TV Detective

I'm fascinated by other professions that use the skills and techniques we also employ as sales pros. Police detectives, for examples.

And while it was just a TV show, a much-studied and quoted TV detective was Columbo, from the series of the same name in the 70's.

Columbo was a master at getting his subjects to open up and share abundant information. He'd often feign confusion and apologize for not being as smart as his interviewee, therefore prompting them to explain details and timelines in clearer terms.

We can do the same, by simply saying, "What do you mean by that?"

For example,

**Prospect:** "We are in the process of exploring options for generating more qualified leads for our sales staff."

**Sales Rep:** "Oh, what do you mean by that?"

**Prospect:** "We were finding that our reps were ignoring leads since most of them were just looking for free information. So, now, we are looking at putting more qualifiers in the web form."

**Sales Rep:** "Oh?"

**Prospect:** "Yes, what we need to do is…"

See how much more info you get by just letting them explain what they mean? Many reps would have jumped in after the prospect's first comment with, "Well let me tell you how we can do that!"

Perhaps the technique Columbo was most famous for was the "Just one more question…" He'd give the impression that the interview was over, begin walking toward the door, then turn around and say,

**"Let me ask just one more question…"**

This would catch his subjects off-guard, getting them to say things they might not have earlier. Now, I'm not a believer in trying to trick anyone into anything. But, you might consider making it a policy to always ask one more question to ensure that you are not jumping in too early.

Let's explore this again, in action:

**Prospect:** "We often need to place orders after our East coast supplier has closed for the day."

**Rambling Rep:** "Oh, we stay open until 8:00 p.m. your time!"

**Better add-on "What do you mean?" question:** "What do you do mean by that?

**Follow-up questions:** "What do you do in those situations?"

"What other implications does that cause?"

Then you can really get them in a feeling-the-pain state of mind by getting them to attach a specific cost to problems or needs they have.

Here are questions using other examples,

**"Tell me Joan, what do you feel it's costing you to have your staff sort and seal those envelopes by hand?"**

**"Frank, about how much per year would you say you spend on copier machine maintenance?"**

**"Can you estimate how much business you're losing because you aren't contacting your smaller accounts?"**

The additional questions help you to put them in a better, more receptive frame of mind to hear about your solutions. And, once you've discovered what the problem means to them, in monetary terms, you are better-prepared to position the benefits and price of your products and services.

☎

## Learn Their Buying Progression

When questioning, it's useful to isolate the steps the prospect follows when making a decision. Here are some fine ideas from the book, ***"Guerrilla Selling,"*** by Bill Gallagher, Orvel Ray Wilson, and Jay Conrad Levinson.

We all typically have a methodology we follow when making decisions, and this progression is unique for everyone. We do tend, however, to follow the same progression consistently. A good question to learn this decision-making progression is,

**"How did you decide to . . .?"**

Then listen carefully. What you'll likely hear is something like, "Well, first we ____, then we. . ."

The answer not only gives you their buying criteria, but also the progression of their strategy. Once you know this, you can match their strategy and systematically structure your case using the same progression.

*(SOURCE: "Guerrilla Selling," by Bill Gallagher, Orvel Ray Wilson, and Jay Conrad Levinson.)*

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## Avoid This Useless Question

Here's a virtually worthless question: It occurs after a prospect says, "I'm buying from ABC Company," and then the sales rep says, *"Oh, is everything going OK with them?"*, or, *"How are they working out for you?"*

What do these reps expect the prospects to say? *"Oh, everything is awful. I'm looking for a supplier. Glad you called. How do I sign up?"*

Instead, be prepared with a question that specifically deals with a problem you know they're likely experiencing.

**"I see. What are you seeing in the area of ____?"**

For example, "What has been your experience with returns?"

At this point you want them talking about potential problems, not the fact that they like their present supplier. ☎

# How to Get Referrals Using LinkedIn

Adrian Gahlot is a Customer Success Manager with LinkedIn. He shared an excellent post about asking for referrals from your LinkedIn connections. Here is his post, and one of the templates he has success with in getting referrals and recommendations from clients and customers.

## Adrian's Post

84% of B2B buyers start their buying process through a referral.

If you ponder on this stat a little longer, you'd realize that most of the decisions one takes today started from a recommendation through a friend, colleague, acquaintance etc...The gym you joined, the recent vacation you planned, a new cuisine you tried.

The reason we prefer buying into recommendation is that we trust these people!

Hence, it goes without saying that this natural tendency influences the business decisions we make too!

In fact, your B2B buyer is 5X more likely to engage with you via a warm introduction than a cold outreach.

The sad part: only 11% of Sales professionals ask for them!

Check out a template that has worked for me when trying to get warm introductions.

☎

**<u>Keep these 3 points in mind whenever you are asking for an introduction</u>**

1. Mention the value prop you think you can add to their business.
2. Give an option to 'opt out'.
3. Always add a pre-written message on their behalf which they can simply forward.

**If one of your ex-client OR existing client is connected to your prospect**

Hi Andrew,

How are you?

The reason I'm reaching out is that I noticed that you are connected with John Doe who happens to be a Decision Maker at one of my accounts <Y>. I really think there's an amazing fit for Linkedin Sales Navigator in their team but have struggled to get through.

Would you be comfortable sharing your experience working with me – it would really help! If you don't know John well enough I totally understand, in that case, any intel you have on his or his team is also appreciated.

To make it easy below is a pre-written message you could use.
Thanks!

---

*Hi John!*

*Hope you are doing well!*

*I wanted to take a moment to introduce you to Adrian whom I really trust and have enjoyed working with over the past years. During his time at <company> he had helped us in our digital marketing efforts, resulting in a 30% increase in RoAS YoY. He has some great ideas on how Sales navigator can add value to your Sales team.*

*Definitely worth taking 10 minutes to hear him out.*

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## Self-Motivation Ideas

❑ **Keep in mind that the large** prospect you're waiting to call is buying from someone, but will eventually change. It might as well be from you!

❑ **To beat call reluctance,** think of all the successes you've had when you dug in your heels and took action. Nothing but guilt and regret results from wasting time, and avoiding the phone. Pick it up now and equate action with accomplishment!

❑ **Set short-term activity** goals, such as number of prospecting calls in a two-hour period. It keeps you focused, active, and invigorated.

❑ **Rejection is not an experience.** It's how some people *define* an experience. You'll never be rejected again if you can pinpoint something positive that comes from every call.

❑ **Don't settle for** "good enough." That's defined as just enough to get by and survive. Always put in that little extra.

## Preface Your Presentation With Pain

Preface your benefits (results) with a reminder of the pain they want to avoid, and/or have experienced in the past. For example,

**"And this next option will ensure that you'll never have to spend time manually doing those tedious calculations again ..."**

**"Here's something which will help you avoid writing those monthly checks to the repair company ..."**

**"You won't have to worry about whether or not your reports are accurate anymore, because ..."**

## How to Handle Tough Objections

Here are some ideas to help you get them talking when they object.

❑ **Replace objections with benefits. "I know you want (objection). But isn't it true that (benefit) is more important?" "Although (objection) seems vital right now, won't (benefit) be more significant in the long run?"**

❑ **Face them down.** Let's say the prospect raises a tough objection like, "Why should I buy from you when I know I can get a similar product for much less?"

*Respond:* **"Well, do you have competitors who sell for less? How are they able to do that? Then ask yourself what you're really looking for, as much as possible, or as little as possible."**

❑ **The Feedback Formula.** Ask the prospect, **"That's a real concern for you, isn't it?"** He'll either brush off his own objection, or validate it. If he validates it, respond by saying, **"I can see how you feel about it, and I understand. But have you considered (benefit)?"**

*(SOURCE:"Secrets of Closing Sales," Charels Roth and Roy Alexander)*

## Learning Their Buying Process, and Who the Buyers Are

We always need to find out the decision-making process within an organization and determine who the players are.

Here's a good way to learn that information without bluntly saying, *"So, what's your title?"*, or, *"Are you the decision maker?"* After they mention someone's name, such as, "I'll discuss this with Jerry Smith," reply with, **"So, Jerry Smith works for you?"**

They typically answer with something like, "Oh, no, he's the VP of Finance," or, "Yes, he's the Supervisor in charge of…" In any event, they provide great info you can use to continue questioning.

Art Sobczak's

# SMART CALLING REPORT

June 2019 Volume 36 Number 6

# How to Begin a Scheduled Meeting and Quickly Get Them Talking About Exactly What They Want

Today there is tremendous emphasis on "getting the meeting."

Entirely new job positions have been created for it. Actually, they might have just been given new names, Sales Development Professional, Business Development Rep. Regardless of who does it, it involves calling to arrange a meeting, either in person, on the phone, or online--which adds the visual element without being there.

In my experience, I have seen far too many situations where the appointment and meeting was set, but then the caller—or a different sales rep blew it in the actual meeting.

## They Fail at the Meeting

Now, there are lots of things that could have contributed to the rep not being set up for success to begin with. Perhaps the prospector simply called and quickly asked for, and got a meeting without any conversation. I've never been a fan of that. These are the people who follow the "the first call is just to get the meeting" myth. That usually results in a disinterested, sometimes unqualified prospect.

And those are costly when you calculate the actual costs of a meeting.

Perhaps the caller didn't find out if it would be appropriate to get others in the meeting or on the next call.

OK, we won't focus on those for now. Let's talk about the rep who calls or shows up for the scheduled meeting. And then proceeds to go into his or her pitch.

You know where that ends up, right?

With a disinterested, unengaged prospect, looking at his or her watch—while the salesperson is droning on about his "thing," his product or service, and what he feels are the benefits.

Ask any decision maker, and they've been in more of these sales presentations than the good ones.

Sure, the rep might ask some basic questions, but the default most often reverts to "pitch mode" by the salesperson.

And even though most sales training teaches we should go deep with questions, the easy thing to do for salespeople is to shift into what they are comfortable with: dumping product knowledge.

But of course, that is exactly what we don't want to do. Because it is ineffective and creates objections.

## The Recommended Strategy

So what is the effective, recommended strategy?

Get the prospect talking about what they want. Quickly.

This should not be a surprise for anyone who has followed me for any time at all. Pretty much every call opening I've ever suggested ends with letting the prospect know that in order to deliver on the possible value we hint at, we need to ask some questions.

And, the same format can and does work if your model is to follow my process for the initial call, and then to arrange a meeting or demo.

So for example, a good first call would reach the moment where you determine a meeting would be appropriate.

You've qualified them, and asked questions at the advanced level... not only to get information, but to intrigue them, getting them thinking about a problem, pain or desire, and interested in speaking more.

Of course I've always been partial to taking the first call as far as possible. If the music is still playing, stay on the dance floor. Why end the party prematurely if they are playing along

But OK, let's say for whatever reason, your model is another meeting. You suggest the best next step would be a web demo call, and that the other department heads should be involved.

Your prospect agrees. You confirm the date and time, and assign some homework. Which could be them collecting data, speaking with their front line team... whatever.

## The "Socratic Opener"

You want to be prepared to use the "Socratic Opener" to kick off your questioning.

This is something I pulled out of a 23-year old book that was on my shelf, *"Socratic Selling,"* by Kevin Daley and Emmett Wolfe.

I had forgotten about the book. But pulling out older classics is something I do regularly. Not everything has changed in sales, regardless of what you might read on the Internet.

In fact, most things regarding human behavior have not changed. And things you read in actual books, by successful people who authored them based on experience, are more valid than a social media post that an out-of-work "expert" or "influencer" just typed up.

*(Continued on Page 5)*

# Sales Observations

**I was reviewing a few of the** past The Art of Sales podcast episodes when doing some research for a client training workshop, and found myself listening to the entire show again where I had Dan Hoemke on as the guest, "*CEO Guest: Dan Hoemke Shares How to Sell to the Top.*

As a former CEO of Humana Healthcare, and someone who has, and still sells to the C-Suite. He had some tremendously valuable how-to's anyone can use to sell to decision makers--at any level.

One of the many tips that sent me scrambling for my pen was on our discussion of not being proposal printers... meaning that proposals should be the result of moving the sales process to the point where there is already a good probability of getting the deal. In response to an early proposal request, Dan suggests saying,

"**The last thing I would want to do is put a proposal in front of you that was not worthy of your consideration.**"

Powerful. That is a great way to further qualify someone as serious, and get them to continue with questioning.

(You can hear this episode, and all of them at TheArtOfSales.com)

**SMART CALLING REPORT**
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:


**In all my years of doing this I** understand that in our huge audience we have many who are high-activity callers. You are on the phone all day long, making 40+ attempts per day. (And some in that group just laughed at how low 40 is!)

There are others who are whale hunters, carefully selecting a big prospect per whatever time period... day, week, or even a month. These typically are huge-dollar deals,with multiple people and longer sales cycles.

In any case, the same processes apply. In the latter situation, sales pros have the luxury of taking a bit more time for more in-depth research and activity since the potential ROI is there.

This tip falls into that category, although of course anyone could use it.

When you have reached the point where you are mostly prepared to reach out to your new prospect, make an after hours call to his/her number. (Hopefully it is not a mobile phone!)

Your goal here is not to leave a message, but to hear their greeting. Lean in and listen carefully for tone, cadence, personality, accent... anything you can pick up.

Do they sound friendly and inviting, or to-the-point. If the latter, don't let that intimidate you; let it give you clues as to how you should approach them with your message.

And do take notes on any timely info, such as if they will be out, who else to speak to, and whatever else they share. This is a form of passive social engineering.

Finally, do be prepared in the unlikely event they pick up live!

Who knows?

They could be in the opposite end of the world and have their calls forwarded. Do have a version of your value statement prepared.

**In the Hubspot blog I saw an** interesting justification for having more success with leaving voice mails at the end of the day:

"*We can thank the serial position effect. This psychological phenomenon says when you show people a list, they'll remember the first and last items the best. That means when you're trying to grab a prospect's attention, you want to be one of the first or last things they hear.*"

Hmm, interesting. They reason that when you hear voicemails at the start of the day, even if one DOES sound somewhat interesting--but not urgent-- it could land on your "Possibly to Get To" list with other well-intentioned things... that get muscled out by other things.

However, if someone is wrapping up their day and they hear something interesting, they might reply with an email or call back right then and there.

**Captain Obvious here, but we** are half way through 2019. If you are on track to hit or blow away your numbers, congrats! I challenge you to do it by a lot. Too often I have seen people pump the breaks, which has a lingering effect. And if you are not where you want to be, you can do anything in six months, **if you want to!**

Now go and make this your best month ever!

Art

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# Prospecting Fellow Alumni

When you are are looking for a commonality to make a connection with a prospect, how about starting with the commonality first and then the right prospect?

More specifically, how about fellow alumni of your college or university?

Most of us have a special bond with our school. And this brother or sisterhood inherently gives us an advantage over a stranger off the street.

And what's both interesting and odd about this at the same time is that there were likely thousands of others at your school that you saw everyday and never spoke with, but if you saw someone in an airport in another city with a t-shirt from your school you might be likely to say something to them, right?

I digress.

### How To Do It

Ok, how do we use this?

Go to LinkedIn search. Click on the People search.

Then in the Filters, go to the Add a School. Add yours.

Then, you can search by whatever other criteria you want.

I just did one for "VP Sales" in the Title section, and Creighton University, and came up with 82 people with that title.

Now, this does not diminish the need to still have something of value. They likely will not buy from you just because you went to dear old Hometown U.

So, treat it like any other Smart Call. Do your other research. Come up with your possible value for them, like you would any call. Tacking on the "fellow alum" connection at the beginning is used to warm them up and make it easier to get them engaged.

For example, in looking at my search results, one of the first to come up lists coaching kids sports as one of his interests. Perfect. I'd start with this.

"**Hi Matt, Art Sobczak here with Business By Phone. First, I see we're both Creighton Bluejays... I was a couple of years before you... I didn't get to see Benoit Benjamin when he played for us. (chit chat) Well hey, the reason for the call is that I know you are responsible for the new business team there... I specialize in working with...**"

You likley paid a lot of money for your college education. This is one way to leverage it that can have a financial benefit, even if that Statistics 101 class didn't.

☎

## Yes, You Should Leave a Voice Mail

I'm often asked if it is worth it to leave voice mails when prospecting.

Absolutely. You are cheating yourself if you don't.

You don't have to look too far to find those who suggest you just hang up and move on. Bad advice. The arguments I hear for not leaving a message:

-"***No one calls back.***" *Of course* most messages get ignored. There's no way busy decision makers could return messages from all of the people who call them. Don't expect a call back. But you do have an opportunity to leave a value imprint.

**-"It takes time.**" As a percentage of the time you've already put in, not that much compared to the potential impact.

You've already done the heavy lifting. You've done all of your call prep and you are totally ready to give a value-packed opening to the prospect---right? Why in the world wouldn't you take another 30 seconds to leave an impression?

**-"They'll know you are a salesperson.**" If you leave a horrible Me-Me message, yes. But instead, you will leave a message that piques their curiosity, right?

Here's the deal, if you call multiple times and hang up without leaving a message, that shows up on Caller ID. What impression does ***THAT*** leave? It could not be that important, right. And, just think, whose behavior does that resemble? Telemarketers. Robodialers. If they are sitting at their desk and happen to see a call come in again from that number, it is easier to ignore.

A great voice mail does not sell. It leaves a **question** in the listener's mind that they want the answer to.

It should be the same as the great interest-piquing Smart opening that you are already prepared to deliver if they do answer live.

The difference is at the end, you let them know that you will call back, and if they'd like to reach you in the meantime, leave your number. And let them know you are sending an email that they can simply reply to with good times to reach them.

Finally, here's one I just heard and really hadn't given much consideration to, but it has merit: Leaving a few (good) messages also plants a slight psychological feeling of reciprocity in their mind. They might feel slightly obligated to speak with you. Again, not true in all cases, but it can work in your favor with the well-crafted, prospect-focused messages.

So, leave those voice mails!

☎

# What You Say To Yourself Can Lose Sales

Usually my column, and this entire newsletter focuses on what to say to prospects and customers to move toward the sale. Today we'll look at negatives words reps use when speaking to themselves, their peers, or anyone else who happens to be listening. These are words that can maim and kill a sale. Or a career.

## Self Defeating Talk

The following example is taken from a real life incident in a call center. It is typical of many salespeople.

The rep explained to me in a coaching session, "We can never beat them on price."

So what's already wrong? The rep *had not even picked up the phone* that morning. Yet he had painted a picture of defeat in his mind.

It's tragic. Before they utter a word to a client or prospect they have already polluted their minds with reasons why people won't buy. With that type of thinking, it's easy to see why reps feed their clients a steady diet of "don't-buy-from-me"-type feelings.

## Yeah, But

The interesting thing is that when you try to logically deal with this type of attitude, some people will actually go out of their way to defend their negative tendencies. They invariably use the "yeah-but" defense. It goes like this:

"Okay," I reply, "Price is often a key factor in a proposal. So if price is the motivator why not offer the Value Plan?"

"Yeah, the Value Plan is cost effective, but it does not include scaling. (a teeth cleaning procedure for pets)"

"Is scaling important to the customers?" I inquire.

"Well, I am pretty sure it is. Most customers find it important."

"Did you ask? Was this identified as a need?"

"No."

I replied, "Let's take a different approach. The Elite Plan offers scaling. If scaling is so important to the client, why not offer it?"

"Yeah, but the Elite Plan includes disability."

"So???" I ask.

"Well, clients don't want disability."

"Oh I see," said I. "Did you ask?"

"No."

"Isn't disability a good thing to have?"

"Yeah, but it increases the premium and when I tell the client about the disability it turns them off."

Okay, I can't bear to go any further. The rep was building ready-made excuses for why he could not sell the product. He lost before he had even begun calling.

Apart from maiming his mind by his negative words, there are a couple of other factors contributing to this negative attitude. First, the rep made broad assumptions. He assumed that all clients thought scaling was important. As it turns out, most of the clients had *no idea* what scaling was. Secondly, armed with these false assumptions, the rep did not bother to question to determine the client's needs.

There's more. In cases where scaling *was* deemed important, the rep felt compelled to position the disability coverage as an unnecessary add-on which raised the price. In fact, the rep actually *told* clients that the Elite plan included scaling **but** also included disability. Of course the clients viewed it as a negative simply because the rep positioned it as one.

This is a classic example of talking too much. If disability is unimportant to the client, then don't *sell* the feature of disability. If scaling is important, sell the scaling feature and its benefits.

## Where the "Yeah, Buts" Came From

Shortly after the conversation with this rep I met with five or six other salespeople for coffee. These guys were the "grizzled old vets."

It was deja vu. I heard the same dialogue as I had with the rep that morning about scaling!

We tend to build "support" groups that reinforce our attitudes. Sometimes we fall into the trap of hanging out with negative individuals. Over a period of time, a subtle brainwashing occurs. We actually begin believing our own negative junk and spread it to our clients.

## What to Do

First, the next time you're with a bunch of reps, stop and listen. how do they speak? How do they position your product or service? Is it negative or positive? Is there a pattern forming? Figure out if those around you jump on the band wagon.

Second, if it is a negative atmosphere try to determine if there is any legitimacy to it. If there is a product flaw of some sort, do the proper people in management know about it? And it is simply not enough to "mention" it. Anyone can do that.

Go further. Gather data. Collect "evidence." And make some suggestions or recommendations. For example, when I asked the reps how many clients/prospects actually mention scaling, there were only two out of several hundred who had commented.

Third, if there is no legitimacy to the whining or complaining, then remove yourself from that environment. Don't hang out with that crowd. It will poison you.

Fourth, if you find that you are already poisoned with negative talk, **stop it.** You have a choice. Learn more about the product features and benefits. Spice up your selling skills by reading newsletters, read sales books, listen to selling and motivational tapes.

Words that maim and kill a client evolve from the same words we speak to ourselves. Keep a keen ear out for how you speak to yourself and others, ensure it's all positive, and your thoughts and actions follow.

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*(continued from cover page)*

Anyway, I am going to take the "Socratic Opening" and adapt and refine it a bit. (And I do still want to give credit to where I found it, although many people might just take this idea and call it their own. )

I'll just lay it out for you, then I'll break it down, show why it is effective, and offer variations you can use.

Here it is:

The day and time arrives, the call begins, small talk and introductions exchanged, and you then say,

**"Mike, I'm prepared to talk about (the result/benefit they were interested in and what you had discussed on the first call). If you could give me your perspective on that, we can focus the meeting on what interests you most."**

Boom. There it is. Sit back and watch the magic unfold.

The book analyzes each part of it. I'll take their analysis, adapt it, and add my suggestions to it.

### 1. Saying You are Prepared.

**"I'm prepared to talk about (the result/benefit they were interested in and what you had discussed on the first call)."**

By stating this at the beginning, you are implying that you have done your homework and could get into presenting what they might be thinking they are going to hear.

The authors say that that this lends credibility to you, and it puts the prospects at ease. They give other ways to word this:

**"I'm ready to discuss..."**

**"I could start by explaining..."**

I've come up with some of my own:

**"Some people might start out by going into a presentation about (result/benefit) and I certainly could do that..."**

**"I'm prepared to talk about many of the reasons that others have taken advantage of (benefit/result)..."**

I like mine, since we're actually doing a "pattern interrupt" on what they might be expecting a typical salesperson to do. You are contrasting yourself with them. And accomplishing the same thing the authors suggest of notifying the prospect you are prepared.

### 2. Invite the Prospect to Speak

**"...If you could give me your perspective on that..."**

Notice the choice of the word, "perspective." The authors point out that this is a "mind" word.

Everyone has thoughts, viewpoints, and ideas. The prospect doesn't have to work too hard to answer.

And they point out to avoid the use of words like, "problems," "concerns," and "needs."

What? Doesn't most training suggest that we get into those things? Yes, but not this early.

Depending on what has transpired up to this point in your discussion, they could justifiably be thinking—or say—"Wait, we didn't say we have a need."

Also, notice you are not asking them to just tell you about their business—which some training suggests. Instead, you focus them on the particular topic at hand: the result of your product or service.

### 3. Offer an Immediate Benefit

**"...we can focus the meeting on what interests you most."**

Although the book doesn't explain it in this way, I find this is brilliant in that we have already mentioned the possible benefit they will hear about and are expecting, but now we have disrupted that thought with something even better:

What interests **them** the most.

It appeals to the most basic emotion: what we as individuals want.

On the surface, this technique is relatively simple: letting the prospect know you want to find out what is important to them instead of pitching what you have.

And it is what I have been preaching for years.

But this framework is so well thought out and constructed that I suggest you give it a try.

The authors give numerous examples of its success in action.

In one case, once arriving at the meeting, the rushed prospect said that something urgent came up so he needed to make it a quick 15 minutes. The rep was tempted to just go into his presentation slides. Instead, he calmly executed the Socratic Opener. The 15-minute meeting ended up being an hour. With the prospect talking for 50 minutes of that. And the sales rep generating an opportunity far beyond what he was seeking.

One final suggestion on implementing this and having success with it. Just like with any process and technique, you can't wing it.

You must craft the words that are most comfortable, appropriate, and likely effective for you (subject to tweaking, of course).

And then practice. Out loud. With others. And record them. Rinse and repeat.

The authors say,

*"It's one thing to think of what you'll say. It's quite another to train the mouth to say the words you choose. Rehearsal guarantees that your mouth will follow your mind's orders."*

In conclusion, if you arrange meetings with prospects, the Socratic Opener will be effective for you. Go through each of these steps, create several variations, practice til they are natural, and then put it into practice.

☎

# Learning, and Creating, from a Mistake

When first starting as an SDR at Yesware, an email management software solution, Saniat Sheikh learned the importance of always knowing your competition.

Real-life example: On a cold call, the prospect said that he didn't have time to talk and he used a competitor.

Saniat mistakenly mentioned he was unfamiliar with the competitor and despite "not having enough time," the prospect laid out to him the importance of having that information.

Now, Saniat suggests keeping quick facts about your competition on-hand during cold calls.

You can do this by creating your very own battle card.

In column A of a spreadsheet, list out price, features, customer dissatisfaction with competitor, where you win, where they win, and customer stories. In row 1 (starting with your company) list out your competition and fill out the information.

Here are some quick tips to do the research:

Track them down on Twitter to see what customers complain about.

Read reviews on G2 Crowd — Filter to the 1 star ratings to see where the competitor has the most satisfaction hiccups.

Get acquainted with their features, strengths, and weaknesses.

| Feature Set | Yesware | Competitor 1 | Competitor 2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Price | $$ Moderate to Expensive<br>(no additional usage fees!)<br><br>$12/15 for email tracking, calendar scheduling, and personal templates<br>$25 for mail merge and team reporting<br>$55 for Salesforce integration, reporting and Touchpoints<br>$100 + implementation fee for dialer<br>$110 + implementation fee for dialer with recording | $$$ Expensive<br>(plus additional usage fees)<br><br>$75 for cadence scheduling, dialer, SFDC integration, tracking<br>$100 for SFDC sync, automation rules (limited), VM drop, custom fields in SFDC, integrations, analytics and cadence automation<br>$125 for local presence, other integrations, automation rules, email attachments & call coaching | $$$ Expensive<br>(plus additional usage fees)<br><br>Between $100-150, depends on package |
| Implementation | Light for Pro, Team and Enterprise / Medium-Heavy for dialer | Medium-Heavy | Medium-Heavy (30 days) |
| Native to Inbox | Y - all features embedded within Gmail / Outlook | N - but have plug-in with basic features | N - but have plug-in with basic features (templates, sequences, tracking, send later, click-to-call) |
| SFDC Sync | Y | Y - but complicated (lots of manual steps) | Y - but complicated (manual steps) also syncs colleague events (unless you perform an in-depth process) |

## Get Referrals from Within Their Company

If you have a customer within a company that has multiple locations, or many departments at one location, you probably haven't even scratched the surface of potential business.

The hard part is over—getting the company as a customer. Now that you're in the door as part of the family, ferret out other opportunities. Ask your customer,

**"Who else within your company also uses/does ______, who could also take advantage of something similar to what we're doing together?"**

Prompt them a bit: **"How about other departments? Other locations?"**

Even if they come up empty, ask them, **"If I can find other buyers on my own, it wouldn't be a problem if I mention your name as a reference, would it?"** ☎

## Fine-Tune Your Openings

When evaluating openings and voice mails I scrutinize every word and sentence and ask, "Is this working toward the objectives (piquing interest and moving them to the questioning), or is it just taking up space?"

That's when we can do micro-surgery on the messaging... addition by subtraction, meaning making the message more relevant by tightening it up.

Here's another reason to tighten up your messaging: with most of your calls going to voice mail, more are going to personal cell phones, which usually provides a text transcription. I suggest calling your own cell voice mail and leaving your message. See how it looks, and you might make further edits. ☎

# The Small Talk and "How are you today?" Debate

Seems like that in every workshop I do the topic of small talk at the beginning of calls is brought up.

Makes sense.

It's a part of everyday human interaction in almost every conversation.

And everyone has an opinion on it. Because it is based on feelings.

I've writen and spoken a lot about this over the years... I won't rehash it all here.

In summary, I believe that using small talk, and an ice-breaker such as "how are you?" depends on,

-the individual, first and foremost. If you are comfortable using it/them, fine.

-how someone answers the phone. Personally, if I get a warm vibe from the get-go, I'm more likley to get a bit folksy.

And my caveats always are, if you DO use them,

1. Be different.

2. Be sincere and conversational in your delivery.

Along these lines, I stumbled upon a YouTube video by sales trainer Marc Wayshack. He suggested an alternative to "how are you?"

His alternative is,

"**Have have you been?**"

In his studies (he didn't elaborate), the response was SIX TIMES greater with that line.

Again, not sure what the metrics are or what they mean, but, it's worth a try.

In my own limited sample size of attempts, both on the phone and in-person, sales and social situations, it has gotten a favorably response.

### Tips From Fellow Smart Callers

**I also posed this question in the Smart Calling Community on Facebook and got some great suggestions.**

Edward Totland said,

Yes, I do a simple introduction, following the smart calling format then i'll interrupt myself from going any further, and say, **"Did I get your name right? is it pronounced, Sub-Check?"**

Then regardless of what they say i'll say my name looks simple but people get it wrong all the time, Tot-land.!! then just get back on track with your normal introduction and opening statement.

I think when you admit a tiny bit of stupidity in a certain area it brings you down to earth from any lofty sales pillar you may be standing on in their eyes,

Jan Meyers said,

I don't ask how they are unless I really want to know. You have to be careful, so that it means something.

Before I make the call, since I call nationally, I usually check the weather in their zip code. Weather is something we all have in common.

You can't assume they like or dislike their current weather based on your own feeling about yours. It also helps to be sure you have their location right.

**"Hi Joe, my records show you are in CO, is that correct?"**

If they say yes, then lead on with a comment like,

**"I bet you haven't heard this enough—but wow, did any of the first day of summer snow reach you?"**

If they say no, they are not in CO, this gives you the opportunity to update your records, and say,

**"Not sure how I thought you were in CO, maybe I was listening to the news about all that snow they got on the first day of summer."**

The point is...everyone likes to comment on weather. It breaks the ice, is a quick comment, and you move on to why you are calling.

Also, if they are hating their current weather, that comes out and affects their mood, and is an indicator they may be a bit on edge, so don't waste a lot of their time.

Asking about weather tells me a lot actually..

## Have Your Person Call Their Person

High level execs like to deal with people they see as being on their level too. If they perceive you as merely a desperate vendor, well, get in line with the rest of the peddlers on the outside peeking through the window. Here's a different idea... have your assistant call their assistant and arrange a meeting.

Exec's assistants often handle their calendars. So, having someone on THEIR peer level call can be effective.

Don't have an assistant? You could hire one on a contract basis for this task.

Just be sure that they are well trained in the Smart Calling process, social engineering, and everything you would be doing on a call. Keep in mind that they are an extension of you.

## Ask What They Do NOT Care About

During your fact finding, in order to determine your prospect's hot buttons, ask them what is least important in their mind. For example, "**Cindy, you seem to be quite familiar with dodgems... tell me, what features are of least concern to you so I don't spend time dwelling on them.**" Then, you have a natural opportunity to provide an on-target sales message.

## Sounds Good?

Try the "Sounds good?" technique as a trial close, or even as a final close. For example, **"What I can do is have your account set up, and have that first shipment—at the 20% discount—sent out tomorrow. Sounds good?"** This is similar to the "OK?" technique in that it is a natural tendency to reply positively to "Sounds good?"

## Finding Other Decision Makers

It can be delicate at times getting the names of other influencers and decision makers without insulting your contact. Here are a couple of ways to do that.

Assuming you're fairly well down the line into a sales discussion you could say, **"Pat, let's fast forward... if you did decide to go with us, would anyone else be sitting in on the final decision?"** The key words are **"sitting in,"** since it's not as direct as "Who else needs to make the final decision on this?"

Another idea is when you agree to send something before your next call. You could casually ask, **"Who else might benefit from seeing a copy of this?"** That might smoke out the names of anyone else who will be involved. If they offer names be sure to get titles and an explanation of how they fit into the decision equation.

## Take the "I" Out of the Message

Using "I" doesn't carry as much weight in dealing with resistance as third party references. For example, compare,

1. "I think that by using our system you will get better results."

2. "Joe Jones at ABC Co. Had the same problem, and after he used our system his results increased by..."

Of course the second example has more credibility because even though the words came out of your mouth, the situation was experienced by someone else.

## Here's a Metric That Matters

Some people suggest that you count the number of no's you get each day, to somehow motivate you to get more. Instead, how about keeping track of something that is positive, and totally part of the process, and which will yield the results you want: the number of times you ASK for the sale or commitment each day.

## Don't Concede on Price

Sometimes prospects/customers can make outrageous and unreasonable statements about price and ask for concessions. A simple way to show you aren't negotiating price, and point out how ridiculous their demand is—without saying it—is to be positive and point out what they could get for what they said they'll spend.

For example,

"Our budget for this is $1500 and no more."

Sales Pro: **"I see. Well, for that, I can give you the stripped down XL model. Of course it won't have the adapter, accessories, and maintenance plan you want, but it would be within that budget."**

*Art Sobczak's*

# SMART CALLING REPORT

July 2019 Volume 36 Number 7

# Despite What You Hear, You CAN and Should Do More on the First Call Than Just Set the Appointment

One thing I've heard for years about prospecting that is just as wrong today as it was then, is a general declaration being stated as if it is the **absolute truth** in *every* situation:

*"Just sell the meeting. Nothing else. Just get the appointment set."*

In my opinion that is only true in a small percentage of situations, industries, and types of calls.

I agree with it as it relates to an inbound call, where the caller is requesting an estimate on something that realistically requires a physical, in-person assessment. Most often those are B2C type interactions.

For example, my friend Tommy Mello, "The Home Service Millionaire," and owner of one of the most successful garage door service companies in the country teaches that inbound reps should never be able to give quotes over the phone.

Their job is to set the appointment for the service/sales technician.

Because they are in a much better position to assess the problem in person, build personal rapport, make a recommendation, and close the sale.

### It Did Not Work Here

Although, this approach failed for the plumbing company that would not even give me a range of prices for a very simple valve-change job, insisting they just couldn't do it over the phone. They had to come out in person.

They did not have an opportunity to. I went with a company that DID provide a range, had them come out, and then went with their middle-recommendation, which was higher than the lowest priced option they gave over the phone.

### B2B Example

The other situations where I can somewhat agree that the first call is just for the appointment is when a caller is prospecting for someone else. The modern B2B titles are Sales Development Rep (SDR), Business Development Rep (BDR). They typically work at the same company as the sales rep they are prospecting for, and then hand the qualified appointment over to the rep.

In other situations, there are outsourced callers making calls and setting appointments.

While there are hundreds of possible variations of how the entire processes work from first call to appointment call by the sales rep, my personal feeling always has been that the first call ideally should NOT be "just get the appointment as quickly as possible and get off the phone."

Why?

Just ask any sales rep who calls a supposed "qualified appointment," or worse, shows up in person, and the prospect vaguely even remembers speaking with the initial caller.

Oh, but an appointment was set.

### My Suggestion

My stance is, if I have someone on the phone, engaged because I piqued their curiosity with a great value statement, why in the world would I suggest we stop talking now, set up another time to speak in the future, and get off the phone? (I'm somewhat raising my voice as I ask that question.)

The number one problem salespeople have right now is actually getting someone ON the phone.

Isn't it absurd then, when we finally get someone live, to then suggest we stop for now and set up another one instead?

If the music is still playing, stay on the dance floor!

*"But Art, people are busy. We might have reached them at a bad time."*

Uh-huh. Didn't they pick up the phone?

And if they are indeed too busy to talk, won't they let you know?

Of course.

### Benefits of Moving Further

Now, look at the benefit of taking this first call further.

You can qualify them even more. This minimizes the chance you follow up with someone who can't or won't buy from you.

You have the opportunity to get them even more interested in what you have, enhancing the chance of a better outcome on the next call meeting. Using a football analogy,

*(Continued on Page 5)*

# Sales Observations

**Here are some great suggestions** for the “That’s expensive” price comment. (Do keep in mind that comment is just that, a statement... not a real objection. Therefore, in many cases you’re OK not even responding.)

**“Yes, it could be... if you don’t use it.”**

**“Yes, if it’s not put into practice.”**

(These are useful when the product value is derived when the product/service is used, such as training, memberships, etc.)

**“Not if you factor in the real costs of the alternatives.”**

**“Well, not really if you consider how expensive it will be if you do nothing.”**

**Speaking of money issues,** when they make the comment, “Our budget for this is $1500 and no more,” a response (depending on the context of course) could be,

**“I see. Well, for that, I can give you the stripped down XL model. Of course it won’t have the adapter, accessories, and maintenance plan you want, but it would be within that budget.”**

**SMART CALLING REPORT**
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/ Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:


**Just because you don’t *feel* like** doing something, does not in any way mean you are **incapable** of doing it.

Often we let our feelings get in the way of taking action right now on things that we should be doing, instead of others that will have huge long-term benefits.

If you don’t feel like making one more call for the day, do it anyway.

If you do not feel like you want to take the time to do the research on that prospect, do it anyway.

If you do not feel like taking the time to listen to that self-help podcast and would rather listen to music, listen to the podcast.

If you do not feel like calling that larger prospect, and instead feel safer calling the smaller one, do it anyway.

Any time you allow these feelings of mediocrity and laziness creep into your head regarding what you know you should do, don't hesitate, **just do it anyway!**

**This seems so simple, but often** the things right in front of us get overlooked: speak the language of the person you are talking to.

If a person who only spoke Spanish called a company looking for help, they would likely be directed to the person in the company who spoke Spanish. Well, duh, right?

OK, let’s put it in another perspective.

A rep for a tech-hardware firm gets a CIO on the phone. He jumps into his value statement with:

“ ... and our always-on QoS feature means *you can consolidate radically diverse applications without fear of I/O contention.”*

The CIO would likely respond with, “Oh, our IT Administrator would handle that. You need to talk to him.”

And now the rep has been referred down to an overworked and underpaid operations person.

Know the language of your buyer. Which typically is based on the results they are responsible for and measured on.

Those are the words that get their attention.

**Similar to the previous point,** sales pro Tim Spreda stresses listening very carefully to the customer's choice of words, as that conveys the needs and desires of the speaker.

For example, he shared the story of how one prospect, a buyer for a manufacturing operation, repeated the terms “safety and ergonomics” in almost every sentence. Naturally, Tim focused the recommendation for his materials handling equipment on those areas, and used those words.

Personally when I am on discovery calls with prospective training clients I always record them. I'll take notes on their specific words and phrases, but sometimes we miss thngs in real time. By listening to the recording I'm able to pull things out I might have missed, and use them word-for-word in the proposal.

It's almost like they have written it themselves, which of course will resonate with them.

Now go and make this your best month ever!

Art

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# The Only Closing Technique that REALLY Works

*By Jeb Blount*

It doesn't matter where I go or what I do I can't get away from salespeople who quiz me about closing techniques and sales managers who beg me to teach them how to get their salespeople to close. I try to avoid these conversations because philosophically I believe that closing is a process that depends on excellence throughout the entire sales cycle, rather than a point in time where a manipulative line or tactic gets the prospect to say yes.

Everyone in sales is looking for the edge that will help them close more deals.

Unfortunately, most people want the easy way out so they spend their time looking for shortcuts and silver bullets which will miraculously deliver huge commission checks. This is why so many questions I get include statements like, "what's the trick," or "can you tell me the secret" It is also why so many salespeople are duped into buying into seminars and products that promise to deliver these secrets of closing only to find that there really is no secret.

## There is No Easy Way

Sales, like athletics requires training, education, persistence, practice, and a winning attitude. That is the real secret.

Universally, though, there seems to be an unyielding desire to find a magic closing pill. There was even a time when I would wear my special closing tie on sales calls. From superstitions to an endless stream of cheesy scripts, closing, much like putting in golf, is shrouded in mystery. There is no shortage of "experts" who are quick to claim that they have the one, true secret for "closing the deal every time."

Here is the brutal truth: There is only one closing technique that really works.

Now what I'm about to share with you is a secret that has been guarded by the Knights of the Sales Round Table for thousands of years. It has been passed down from generation to generation – given only to worthy sales professionals who have sworn an oath to use this powerful secret wisely and guard it with their lives.

I'm going to reveal this secret to you; but, before going further, I need you to you to solemnly swear on Jeffrey Gitomer's Sales Bible to use this information to earn a higher income, become sales rep of the year, go on your president's club trip, get promoted, and earn a massive income.

Get your note pad and pen ready. Here it is. The silver bullet, the real secret, the magic closing pill:

***Ask***

That's it. The only closing technique that really works. Just ask. Ask for the appointment, ask for the next step, ask for the decision maker, ask for the business. Ask for what you want. Ask.

The fact is, if you are having a hard time getting the next appointment, getting to decision makers, or closing the deal, 9 out of 10 times it is because you are not asking.

Why? Because 9 out of 10 times you are afraid to hear "no."

Rather than admitting our fear and working to overcome it, we blame our failure to close on everything else. We blame our product, our company, the economy, our sales manager, and our luck.

Instead of owning up to our shortcoming we look for secrets, tricks, silver bullets, and turn to cheesy closing scripts that make us and our prospect feel even worse.

Instead of facing our fear of "no" and asking anyway, we hide behind justifications like not being too pushy, or bad timing. Along the way our self-esteem deteriorates, our belief in our self suffers, and ultimately we don't reach our true potential as sales professionals.

## Acknowledge the Fear

Getting past the fear of "no" isn't easy. The first step is to at least acknowledge that your fear is real. I've been selling my entire life and have been incredibly successful at it, yet today I still have to remind myself that "no" won't kill me.

Once you admit that you fear "no" you can then begin to pay attention to your behavior in front of prospects. Start by learning to anticipate the anxiety that comes right before asking for the deal. Then practice overcoming your fear by asking for what you want.

When you fail to ask, and you will fail, don't put your head in the sand a pretend it didn't happen. Instead, acknowledge your failure, get back up, and on the very next call ask for the business.

*(Jeb Blount advises many of the world's leading organizations and their executives on the impact of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills on customer experience, strategic account management, sales, and developing high performing sales teams. He speaks to and delivers training to high-performing sales teams across the globe. SalesGravy.com)*

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# Know When to Let Go

Are you a persistent sales rep, or just plain annoying? The line between persistence and annoyance can be thin. I recall a scenario when I handled some advertising for a major corporation I worked for several years ago. An advertising inside sales rep did a great sales job on me initially, but then pursued me until she became a complete and utter pain in the . . .

Jennifer had initially sold me on the benefits of advertising in her company's weekly magazine. She presented a host of impressive studies claiming to have a well-balanced audience for my product. She handled my objections well and closed the sale.

I got exactly four responses to the ad. Not good. Not necessarily her fault, but I was burned nonetheless.

### The Calls Continued

Jennifer continued to call wanting more advertisements, and her efforts included a rather thorough "independent survey" which probed the readers.

*"It's your target, Jim,"* she said. *"Shall I book you for a full page ad this time?"*

"No," I replied emphatically, "You may not. The draw from my last ad to that well-targeted market only drew four responses. I doubt the survey and I plan to run another ad with XXX publication."

*"Oh, they don't have the same readers as we do. Our survey shows it. It's not what you want."*

"Then how come I pulled over a hundred orders with a single run?"

*"Well, it's not who you should be targeting. The survey shows that our publication is read more by your potential customers."*

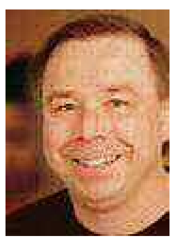
"Jennifer, you are not listening. I got four orders from your publication and over a hundred from XXX. Maybe your magazine isn't being read. Maybe your survey is not so accurate."

*"Ah, but it's not 'our' survey. It was an independent survey. Take a look and see. It is our readers that should be buying your product."*

Need I go on? Jennifer was armed with a survey. It was both her shield and sword. She was so blinded by the "results" that her listening was obviously impaired. She bugged me with her innuendoes. For example, when she said, "It's not who you should be targeting," she was really saying, "Jimbo, you're wrong." That's a no-no.

Even so, I could forgive her momentary blindness. But she continued to call. Two more times and the conversation virtually repeated itself. What a pain. But to make matters worse, she managed to get through to my boss, and *his* boss, who in turn came running to me, survey in hand, saying we should run an ad. Hey! Guess who got to break the news about the four lousy orders. I didn't look too good that day. (It was something I was trying to keep quiet.)

Lesson: Listen. Learn. Recognize a legitimate "no" and let sleeping dogs lie. Don't ruin a long run relationship for a short term kill.



*(Jim Domanski is President of the Telemanagement Consulting Group, a telemarketing consulting and training firm. Contact him at 613-591-1998)*

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### Sometimes What You Do Not Say is More Persuasive

Think back to the last time someone said this to you:

"I've got something I'd like to go over with you . . . nah, forget it. It's not that important."

What was your feeling? Curiosity, right?

Sometimes what you don't say can stimulate interest. The information you withhold can get your prospects and customers drawn into the conversation, interested in hearing what you might have for them.

Therefore, instead of telling someone what you think you can do for them, tease them first. For example,

**"There are a few ways we might be able to help you increase the response to your ads. These are methods that have helped other people. Let's talk about your situation first to see if they would even be worth discussing."**

Now, do you think that person would be likely to answer the questions?

Certainly!

Here's the formula:

1. Pique their curiosity with a potential benefit. Make hearing it contingent on them answering questions.

2. Ask the questions.

3. Present the benefits alluded to earlier with the assurance they're listening to what you have to say.

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## Be Like a Waiter and Ask for the Order

Ever notice how busy waiters manage their customers? They always ask for the order! **"What would you like?" "What can I get you?" "What do you prefer today?"** In contrast, think about the results if they were wishy-washy, explaining every menu item in detail, but never asking for action. It would unnecessarily lengthen the experience for everyone involved. Just like a sales call.

Ask yourself, "Do I just *finish* my presentations, or do I ask for and invite action at the end?"

Sadly, many sales reps invest plenty of time working up to the action phase of the call, then stop short of asking for commitment. They volley control back to the prospect/customer, when, in fact, like a restaurant customer, your prospects want to be led with requests and suggestions.

When it comes time, close. Ask. Get commitment. Without movement, nothing happens.

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*(continued from cover page)*

setting an appointment on a first call with no discussion is like starting on offense at your own one-yard line. A lot of ground yet to cover, and the odds are not in your favor.

By taking the first call further, you have moved the ball downfield, closer to the endzone. Maybe almost all the way where scoring is just a formality.

I do it all the time.

Similar to the previous point, you can also help ensure a better next meeting.

You can ask them to get other stakeholders involved. Even do some preselling for you.

When you take the first call further, you satisfy the buyer's curiosity and need now. If I am talking to a sales rep about something I'm interested in, I don't want to get all worked up only for the rep to say, "Uh uh, not so fast. We can't go further now. You have to wait."

Forcing someone who is interested now to wait is like watching a burning match go out.

We live in an instant gratification society. Seize the opportunity when it is right in front of you, right now.

### What to Do

OK, success with this relies on having the strategy, desire, and preparedness with your words to take the initial call as far as you can.

Sell yourself on the fact that you want to maximize how the advancement of every contact.

Don't get uptight when the conversation is going smoothly. (It's amazing to me how many reps panic and jump off the train when it's moving.)

When you do reach that moment when it is appropriate to set the next action, ensure you follow some proven steps

### Setting Up, and Executing an Effective Follow Up Call

As I've regularly written and taught, the success of your follow-up is in relation to the success of your previous contact.

This includes

- having a substantive reason for the follow up,
- getting a commitment they are doing something between then and the next contact,
- asking them to get others involved (if they are essential for the final decision), and,
- getting agreement for when that will take place.

That sets up and actually writes the opening for the follow-up call:

**"Hi Pat, it's Dale with ABC Systems calling to continue our conversation from last week, where you had interest in cutting down your time-to-market on new releases, and wanted to review the demo video explaining how we do it. I'd like to discuss your observations, and I have some additional case study results I think you'll find interesting."**

Notice that example also brings something new to the table.

Here is an additional idea for the follow-up:

Ask if anything has changed since the previous contact.

For example,

**"Since we spoke two weeks ago, has anything changed in your world regarding this issue?"**

So, the mantra of *"Set the appointment quickly on the first call and get off"* is bad advice for most salespeople.

If my sugggestion resonates with you, adopt it and I'm confident you will see your call efficiency and effectiveness—and sales—improve. ☎

## How to Build Instant Credibility

It's not enough to have a good offer for your prospects. You must be perceived as credible so that it's believable.

According to Dr. Robert Cialdini, author of "Influence," there's a way you can quickly build credibility in the prospect's mind.

What you should do early in your conversations is mention a flaw or drawback to your offer, or tell them what wouldn't work in their situation.

For example, Cialdini relates the story of a suit salesperson who literally tore a suit out of a man's hands and refused to sell it to him because the fit wasn't right, and couldn't be corrected by tailoring. The prospect was so impressed, he bought $4000 worth of clothing!

Here are some examples:

**"Jan, I'm not sure our highest-priced model is necessary for what you want to do. Let me recommend one that is priced lower ..."**

**"That item is going to take quite a bit longer to get in stock. You might not want to wait that long. I do have some alternatives for you..."**

By telling someone what doesn't fit, the impact is much greater when you tell them what does fit. ☎

# The Stalker Approach is No Way To Get an Appointment

*By Kendra Lee*

Not long ago, I had a back-and-forth discussion with a sales rep who just simply wasn't taking the correct route in regards to following up with a prospect.

This undoubtedly happens all the time, but this particular instance perked my ears up a bit.

The rep engaged in pursuing a prospect with nothing but good intentions, yet ended up coming off as a stalker as a result of her approach.

Worst of all is the fact that she *didn't realize* what it was that she was doing wrong, only that it wasn't working.

To put things simply, the rep in question was devoting her time and energy to all the wrong aspects of prospecting.

Instead of waiting to follow up with a prospect at the five- six-month mark (as he had specifically outlined), she made an attempt to connect after only one month--three months in a row!

Hounding a prospect is an easy mistake to make when the right amount of care isn't put into the prospecting process.

## Tips for Non-Stalkerish Follow-Ups

Consider these three tips for following up with your prospects in a respectful, productive manner until they're ready to work with you.

**1. Don't Ignore the Prospect's Time-Frame Suggestions**

Here's a scenario to consider - you contact a prospect and they explain that now is simply just not the time to begin working together and to get back to them in 6 months.

This is extremely common in prospecting.

It can be very tempting to contact the prospect ahead of time because you know something might have changed, but you must use extreme caution in doing so. While contacting them at perhaps the 5-month mark might be acceptable, getting in touch within a month's time is practically stalking. Avoid the temptation. Give prospects the room they need in order to feel as if you've listened and respected their request.

**2. Utilize the Proper Methods for Staying in Touch**

While you should always respect your prospects' wishes for when they would prefer to be contacted, there's nothing wrong with staying in touch so they don't forget about your interest in meeting with them.

More often than not, however, sales reps take a route that doesn't help them in the end, calling too frequently to try to set the appointment sooner than the prospect is ready.

You can get a lot of mileage out of sending a short, handwritten note, responding to their Linkedin comments, or emailing a relevant informational article every five or six weeks or so.

These prospecting strategies will help to show your interest, gradually build a relationship, yet not make it seem as if you want something from prospects right now. You're just staying in touch.

Anything more and you're pushing your boundaries.

**3. Be Aggressive When the Time is Right**

If you take a full-force approach to follow up with the prospect prior to when they're ready, your chances of alienating them will be extremely high.

This being said, you can be aggressive with your prospecting strategy if you wait until the proper moment.

Use your prospecting follow-up strategy and don't worry about holding back. Combine calling, voicemail, emails, drop-in visits and social media to connect. So long as the prospect expects you to get in touch, you shouldn't feel as if you need to censor yourself.

Closing the first appointment is always a challenge, regardless of how long you spend crafting your value proposition.

However, if you're confident in your follow-up abilities and can keep the hounding temptation at bay, your chances of succeeding can skyrocket.

*(Kendra Lee is a Prospect Attraction Expert, president of KLA Group, and author of the award-winning books The Sales Magnet and Selling Against the Goal. KLA Group helps entrepreneurial and growing companies break through tough prospecting barriers to exceed revenue goals. She is a frequent speaker at national sales meetings and events. To find out more about the author and her "Get More Customers" strategies, visit www.klagroup.com)*

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# Findings From an Email Study

The sales engagement service, SalesLoft, deconstructed millions of emails to find out which best practices lead to higher reply rates. They studied subject lines, greetings, email bodies, and signatures.

They had some interesting findings.

As with any "study" or research, please consider that these are the result of their own study, which in the post I saw did not discuss what types of emails these results came from, what industry, product, sales process, etc. So, obviously you need to make your own judgment with the following.

**1. Craft subject lines no longer than 5 words.** Their research shows that subject lines with just one word outperform the average email by 87%. (Craft sales email subject lines with 1 to 4 words.)

**2. Avoid numbers in subject lines.** They say those showed a 32% drop in response rates.

**3. If you are reaching out based on a referral, say so.** Subject lines with the word "referred" had a whopping 536% higher reply rate compared to the average email.

## 3 Tips for Effective Greetings

**1. Craft subject lines no longer than 5 words.** Research shows that subject lines with just one word outperform the average email by 87%.

**2. Two-word subject lines beat one-word subject lines.** So, use "Hey Jane," rather than simply "Jane." ( Better to start with "Hey Jane" than simply "Jane.")

**3. Say "Hey."** They found that is the best leading word in a subject line, commanding a 23% higher reply rate.

**4. If you don't know the prospect's first name, don't overthink it.** Just say "Hey there."

## 3 Tips for Improved Email Bodies

**1. Personalize 20% of the content in the body of an email to enjoy a 2x higher reply rate.** (Sales email probability of replies proportion of personalization.)

**2. Be brief.** Keep emails to no more than 50 words to boost reply rates by over 40%.

**3. Avoid bullets.** Emails with bullets suffer 37% lower reply rates.

## 3 Tips for Stronger Signatures

**1. They say the best signoff is "Best."** That's it.

**2. Avoid the P.S.** This one I do not agree with. They reason, "You would not use a P.S. with a colleague so don't use it with a prospect."

They don't say they split-tested this variable, but I'm going to go with personal experience, and what direct mail copywriters use. It's widely known that the MOST read part of a letter is the P.S. I'm assuming the same is true for email.

**3. Avoid opt-out links.** The post suggests that if legal (when you personalize emails, it often is), avoid opt-out links to gain a 38% boost in reply rates.

Now, with all of that said, please do not be that annoying salesperson who just mass-blasts emails all day asking for "15 minutes on your calendar."

Email can be a great tool, but similar to voice mail, it should simply create a question in the prospect's mind that they want the answer to.

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## Ask the Assistant About The Decision Maker's Preferences

Tom Welsh suggests asking the assistant how the decision maker likes to be approached, and addressed. For example, some people enjoy a little small talk, while others prefer getting straight to the point. Some are offended when you use their first name too early in a relationship, others get uncomfortable when addressed as "Mr." or "Ms."

Getting into a conversation like this with an assistant serves two purposes: it obviously gives you good information you can use on the call, plus it implies that you truly care about the decision and are not just a self-interested salesperson who will waste time.

## Put Them in the Picture

Here's the scenario: You have two stacks of photos dropped on your desk. One is a collection of pictures of a vendor's product, their building, and their employees. The other stack is comprised of photos that have YOU in each one. Which one do you likely have the most interest in? Of course, most humans are interested in anything that affects them personally. The point? When you call a prospect or customer, do you begin by talking about yourself and your company and what YOU want to do? Or do you describe an illustration, putting them in the picture? Remember, people don't care diddly about you and what you want—they want to know how what you have will affect them, their interests, their wants, their needs.

## A Question for Assistants

Matt Hagenhoff says that when an assistant says, "He's not in right now," he replies with, **"Oh, is he on vacation?"**

Typically the assistant will then explain exactly where he is, and when he will return.

And if he is on vacation, he finds out the details and asks about it when he does reach the decision maker, building rapport in the process.

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## Help Them Realize They Have Nothing to Fear

A common saying is that the word "fear" stands for "False Evidence Appearing Real." Fence sitters afraid to take the leap many times don't have a logical reason for their inactivity, yet they fear making a decision. And they probably can't explain why. So help them recognize their irrationality.

**"What's the worst thing that could happen if you did this?"**

**"Let's look at the worst case scenario if you moved forward."**

**"Let's think in the future for a moment and assume that you did get this system. Can you think of any downside?"**

**"What if you just went ahead and did it? Is there any real disadvantage you can think of?"**

**"What would be the drawbacks if you purchased today?"**

Or, try this one,

**"Let's say you did nothing. Then where would you be?"**

## Don't Apologize

Don't apologize for taking someone's time at the beginning of a call. It diminishes your importance. For example, consider the caller who says, "I know you're busy, and I'm sorry for interrupting...I'll take just a few seconds, and here's why I'm calling."

Stop. Think about what you're really offering. You have something of value that will help make this person's life better. You need to present that feeling with conviction. If you're not sold on your importance, they certainly won't.

## Don't Cave in To Get the Deal

Seems like the 80/20 rule applies to most everything. Including negotiating. Negotiation experts say that 80% of the concessions occur in the final 20% of discussions. What's important for us is that we don't appear too eager—or desperate—to get a sale, therefore caving in to concessions toward the end.

## Question the Lower Competitive Price

When some reps hear a prospect or customer mention a lower competitive price, they tense up and believe they have to match it to get or retain the business. A smart approach is to remain calm and question the competitive offer in order to blow holes in it.

For example,

**"Oh, that sounds like a really low price. What accessories do you receive with that? How long is the warranty?"**

Especially question in the areas where you know you are strong and offer more.

## Will You Help Me?

After leaving a voice mail, try then opting out to find the buyer's assistant. Then, simply ask him/her **"Will you have a chance to see Ms. Bigg when she comes back?"**

When they answer affirmatively, continue with, **"Great. When she picks up my message, would you please tell her personally that I really would like to speak with her today? I have an idea that she might want to know about."**

By treating the assistant ith respect, and understanding the power they wield, you should be able to get them to help you reach the decision maker.

Art Sobczak's

# SMART CALLING REPORT

August 2019 Volume 36 Number 8

## How to Use a Micro-Commitment in the Objection-Handling Process

I've been teaching a process for years to address the real objections we hear. I've just added a powerful new component to it: the micro-commitment

You can see the process explained in a video by going to YouTube and searching on my name and "objections, " although I'll share a brief version now.

### 1. The Softening Statement

The first step after hearing an objection is using a Softening Statement.

You don't want to give the impression that you are going to argue with them. Therefore it's good to let them know that you are going to be conversational with them. You could say,

**"I see."**

**"I understand."**

**"Not a problem."**

**"Let's talk about that."**

**"Let's discuss that . . ."**

**"That's an interesting point. Let me get a good understanding of it ..."**

**"Tell me more about that... "**

### 2. Isolating the Main Reason

In most cases it's wise for you to narrow their reason for objecting to one issue. After the softening statements we just went through, you could use phrases and questions such as these:

**"Let's take that out of the picture. Would we be the ones you'd choose?"**

**"Let's look at this a different way. Looking at us compared to the others, what would you say would be the more comprehensive choice for you?"**

**"If you didn't use that as one of your criteria, would we be the ones you'd choose?"**

**"If we completely took that out of the discussion, then where would we be?"**

### 3. Doubt-Creation Questions

The next step is where you actually use the doubt-creating questions you will think about and prepare in advance.

So again you will ask your questions here, designed to get them thinking about, and doubting their reasons for objecting.

Ultimately you want them thinking, hmmm, well, maybe there is another way to look at it.

Let's look at a specific situation, a wholesale supplier trying to persuade a retailer to carry his product.

The retail customer says, "We don't need to stock any more lines." The wrong response would be a canned "objection rebuttal," coming back with market share facts and figures that would prove the retailer wrong—but not change his mind. A doubt-creating approach would use questions:

**"How often in the past month have people called and asked for this type of product and you're not able to provide it?", or,**

**"What situations have you had where someone called and asked about a product like this, but they didn't come in because they found out you didn't have it?"**

When you are prepping your questions you would also be anticipating their possible answers, your next questions, and so on.

### 4. The Micro Commitment

Next is the micro-commitment. We now have softened and broken down their resistance. We want to do one more thing before we go into you restating your case as to why they should move forward.

This is simply asking them,

**"Are you open to an idea."**

Boom. This is almost hypnotic.

It's an easy question for them to answer.

Notice the key words.

"**Open.**" Again, given the context of where you are, most reasonable people would at least be open, right.

And then you are asking about

*(Continued on Page 5)*

# Sales Observations

**I got a "Your baby is ugly"** email from a guy who did branding for speakers and consultants.

He tried using some lame humor at the beginning, then said he was doing an audit of every member of the National Speakers Association and their sites.

He then went on to list about 10 things wrong with my home page.

Finally he ended with, "*...and to discuss these, please call me at...*"

Ironically, he violated one of the suggestions he made to me. He said there was nothing prominent on my home page about me. If someone didn't know me, they wouldn't care about everything else. (I guess it would be too much work to click on the *About Art* tab.)

So here was this guy that *I never heard of before* telling me how bad my site was.

That really endeared me to him and made me think, "Oooooh, great points. Thanks. Let me hire you."

No, of course not.

How do most humans view unsolicited advice from someone who has no credibility, especially if that advice is critical?

**SMART CALLING REPORT**
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/ Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:


Exactly. Most people get defensive, and perhaps a bit annoyed.

Even if the advice is valid.

The problem is, the emotion blocks the logic.

What could he have done?

Perhaps say, "**I specialize in working with your peers in NSA, and have helped many take what was already a well-performing website, and help them make some minor tweaks that provide big results in speaking inquiries and bookings. In looking at yours I've identified at least three, and there might be even more. I'd like to ask a few questions to see if you'd like to hear them.**"

So, is the "Your baby is ugly" approach an effective one?

It can be.

It is doing Smart Calling at a high level, when it involves really understanding what could be a problem the prospect has, or what they could do better.

The key to success, as I've detailed here is in the approach.

Establish your social proof... what you have done for others similar to them.

Hint at the fact you know something about them, without offending them, but intimating that you might be able to help them fix something or get something.

Get permission to ask questions instead of just giving them what you know, and the unsolicited advice.

**Stephen Key, cofounder of** InventRight, a product licensing company had an article in Entrepreneur about getting voice mails returned. Most of it was the common things we've convered a hundred times. Although here was his last point that I find a bit intriguing:

"I use a special technique when I'm having a tough time getting someone to call me back and it has yet to fail me. I simply let the person know I will keep calling. I don't call repeatedly, but consistently. Sooner or later, his curiosity is piqued and my sheer doggedness has earned me enough respect to warrant a call back."

Not sure how to take that one and I haven't tried it. Putting myself in the position of hearing it, I probably would only react positively and return the call or pick up the phone if I see it's from him, and if there was good value attached, AND he used that technique with a bit of humor.

For example,

"**And, if I don't hear back either way, I'll call back, since I'll just assume you probably didn't get my message, or you love the sound of my voice (chuckle).**"

Would like to hear how this works if someone uses it.

**As we go to press with this** issue, I'm awaiting the final version of the contract from my publisher for the Third Edition of "Smart Calling." I plan on about 30%-40% updated and new material, without changing the process itself. I'd love to hear what's working for you, and perhaps include you in the book!

Now go and make this your best month ever!

Art

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# The Professional Way to Work With Gatekeepers

*By Jim Meisenheimer*

Why do many of the difficult selling tasks have negative labels?

Words like prospecting, cold calling, gatekeepers, and even the word closing seldom inspire inspiration, motivation or initiative.

I'd like to share some ideas on how you can get a better reception with the gatekeepers you call.

Gatekeepers aren't really gatekeepers. They are people like you and me. (I know, Art likes to call them "assistants.") A lot of salespeople get off to a poor start with gatekeepers because they don't treat them like people.

The gatekeeper has radar that goes on quickly, especially when salespeople call. The gatekeeper has multiple responsibilities. One of them is to keep babbling, unprepared, disorganized, unfriendly, and self-centered salespeople from pestering and possibly annoying senior managers.

I'm also guessing that most gatekeepers are anxious to help their senior managers identify cost saving opportunities, new products, new services, new trends, and even new contacts that add value to their organization.

### From Their Point of View

Let's begin from the gatekeeper's perspective. They don't like pushy and aggressive salespeople. They don't like salespeople who talk too much. They don't like salespeople who have all the answers even before they ask any questions. They especially don't like salespeople who treat them like invisible servants.

Try this on for size. Most people respond well to people who are courteous. Most people respond well to people who speak softly. Most people respond well to people who ask questions. Most people respond well to people who ask for help and advice. Most people respond well to people who have a sense of humor.

There are many ways to approach a gatekeeper. If you don't prepare your approach in advance it's likely that yours will duplicate what other salespeople have said.

### What to Say

Here's an example of what you can say the next time you reach a gatekeeper. Since I personally prepared this for you, it's highly unlikely that your gatekeepers have ever heard this before.

When you reach a gatekeeper, you should act and as if you were there in front of this person: smiling, with your chin up and in the locked position.

Speaking softly, introduce yourself. For example,

**"Good morning, my name is Jim Meisenheimer and I'm with the Superior Products Company."**

Then say, **"I need your help."** Remain silent until the gatekeeper says something like "How can I help you".

Then say, **"I need your advice on what would be the best way for me to get five minutes with Bill Anderson."**

If she says, "You'll have to make an appointment," simply ask who should you speak with to arrange one.

If she asks, "what is this in regards to" give her your "ELEVATOR SPEECH."

An "Elevator Speech" briefly describes what you do and how you add value in less time than it takes an elevator to get from the lobby to the 15th floor.

Then say,

**"I'm not sure what we offer is what Bill Anderson needs."** (Soft and subtle)

Then say,

**"After five-minutes with Bill Anderson he'll either show me the door or want to know more."**

There's no risk – if you don't add value – you're off the phone in five minutes.

Take a moment to re-read the above. Read it out loud. Conventional wisdom suggests that salespeople show up and throw up. My approach is different and creates a hard-to-resist conversation between you and the gatekeeper.

There's a huge difference between sounding canned and being prepared.

Knowing what you're going to say, before you say it will differentiate you from 90 percent of all salespeople.

The best way to pry open a gatekeeper's gate is not to use an ax. The best way may be to ask for advice and a real quick five minutes with the decision maker.

You'll get the cold shoulder less often if you warm up your approach to the gatekeeper.

*(Jim Meisenheimer's sales techniques have helped hundreds of thousands of sales pros. You can get Jim's books at amazon.com)* ☎

## Go For The Sale On Every Inquiry

When someone takes the initiative to call you they have qualified themselves as a buyer to some degree.

So, why not go for the sale every time someone calls you for a price quote or with a question, even if they think that's simply why they might be calling?

If you take the attitude that your function is to provide information, you're wrong. Your job is to **sell.** The more quickly you can do that with one customer, the more quickly you can move on to doing it with the next.

That, using simple math, means you're going to sell more. ☎

# When to Close, and How Often?

All too often sales reps, supervisors and their managers labor under the impression that sales is a "one step" process. In other words, you make a call and you either sell or you don't. Closing on a single call can be a mistake, and, in fact, there are times when a second or third call should be made before you ask for the sale. This month's column looks at using separate and distinct call strategies to close the sale.

## Two Main Points

Two points here. First, customers/ prospects don't always adhere to your schedule. They often need time to think, assimilate, and check out other options. In short, there are times when closing just doesn't make sense from the client's perspective. Attempting to do so could harm the sale.

The second point is that *you* can not always assimilate the data you have received to make a reasonable proposal. You might well need the time to gather the information and formulate a proposal for the next call.

Strategically, there are some benefits to closing the sale on the second or third call. First giving the customer time to evaluate your presentation positions you as "longer term" in your relationship. You are not rushing the client and many will respect that. On the other hand some might argue that this allows the "fish to escape from the net." This is why you must carefully consider the type of product you are selling, the type of client you have on the phone, the sense of urgency, the competitive situation, and whether this is a one-time sale or the start of a long- run relationship.

## Giving the Client Time to Ponder

If the product is complex and/or pricey, if the customer is analytical, if the competitive situation is tight and you are looking for multiple sales, the following technique might be used.

**"Mr. Burla, I recognize that this decision will require some thought. What I would like to do is give you a day to consider the proposal. I will call you tomorrow at 3:15 and we can discuss any other concerns you might have. If everything looks good, we can proceed with the sale. How does that sound?"**

In this example, you have shown professional courtesy by allowing the time for contemplation. At the same time you are creating action by giving the client a specified time frame in which to mull over the proposal. As well, you are "closing" on the precise time of your next call. If the customer commits to the time, chances are that he or she will review your proposal with the view to buy.

## Give Yourself the Time to Ponder

Another instance where you might wish to delay asking for the sale is after the initial questioning phase. As mentioned, you cannot always assimilate the detail provided. It is a great opportunity for sober thought of your own. So instead of forcing a presentation, and fumbling through a proposal or close, you might want to say this;

**"Ms. Clemens, you have given me a lot of good information. What I would like to do is take a day to go over the information and come back to you with a detailed proposal. I would like to set up a telephone appointment for say, 30 minutes, tomorrow at 3:45. How does that sound?"**

From your client's perspective, this strategy positions you as a thoughtful, consultative sales rep who does not have pat solutions or answers. It lends a certain amount of importance and value to the information you have received. Most clients will recognize and accept this. When you do make that return call with the proposal, use the opportunity to its fullest advantage. In other words, you have been given the time to review the information, so use the time to develop a good proposal.

## Tips

Here are some tips. Before calling the client back, review the notes taken from your questioning "mind map" (in the November issue). Collect the data and place them into the following categories: Current Situation and Solutions and Recommendations.

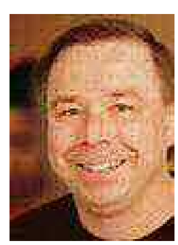
Under "Current Situation" summarize the customer's wants, needs, problems or concerns. Use the opportunity to verify and confirm that these issues are core to the client. Under "Solutions and Recommendations" list how your product or service can solve these wants, needs, problems or concerns. In other words, use features, advantages and benefits,

When you call, start the conversation with something like this:

**"Ms Clemens, as you know, I have taken the time to review my notes and I have come up with some ideas and solutions that might benefit you. What I would like to do is simply review your current situation to ensure that I have understood you correctly and then present some solutions. How does that sound?"**

In this example, you are reminding the client that you took the time to give their situation individual attention. In addition, you are presenting a clear agenda of what you would like to do. It also shows what a tremendous listener you are. Again, this is consultative. The client feels that he or she is part of the process.

In conclusion, closing a sale a call or two later has some strategic benefits. It is not necessarily the wisest strategy in every situation, but there are times when it can and should be used. Consider your products/services carefully. Consider the individual client (decision maker) and his or her "buying style." Consider the future you would like to have with these clients. Consider, too, the type of image, you'd like to portray to these clients. Take time to consider the benefits.



*(Jim Domanski is President of the Telemanagement Consulting Group, a telemarketing consulting and training firm. Contact him at 613-591-1998)*

# How to Use "Status Alignment" in Your Openings and Voice Mails

Last month in one of my The Art of Sales podcasts I did an interview with Oren Klaff, author of the million+ copy-seller, "Pitch Anything." (Episode 75, TheArtOfSales.com.)

We talked about his new book, "Flip the Script- Getting People to think Your Idea is Their Idea."

The book is not your typical sales book. The overall concept is one I've been teaching forever: help people buy. Get them in a frame of mind where THEY make the decision that they need your product/service.

There's a lot that goes into that. He calls the entire principle "Inception."

Oren breaks the process down into several components.

Similar to "Pitch Anything," the approach is more geared toward a "pitching," one-way presentation type of sale, which I am not a fan of, and have refused to participate in when companies wanted me to "present my deck" and TELL them about my training.

I've always insisted I need to ask questions first.

In fact, several years ago I took myself out of a possible huge opportunity with Monster.com because I wouldn't play that game.

With that said, most of the components in this book can be adapted to the Smart Calling process and my overall sales philosophy.

In fact, most of them are already built in to what I teach.

Oren talks about "Status Alignment." This means that in order to connect with a decision maker, he/she must feel that you both are on the same level of the "dominance hierarchy."

These hierarchies exist in pretty much everything.

For example, he's a motorcycle enthusiast, which I asked him about right at the beginning since it was in the intro he provided.

He's into high-end, collector type bikes most people have never heard of.

Personally, I know nothing about motorcycles, and would never get on one.

I jokingly asked him if he's ever been to Sturgis.

He seemed offended, and said he wasn't into THOSE type of motorcycles.

We obviously were not in Status Alignment on motorcycles.

The way WE can use Status Alignment is in our Smart openings and voice mails, to show we know something about the prospect, to build credibility, and to show we are on their level.

He suggests it is done in one of three ways,

1. Use specific industry lingo.

2. Describe a recent action you have taken.

3. Mention a real situation everyone in the industry cares about.

Actually, great Smart openings incorporate all three. Here's one to a CIO of a financial institution.

**"Hi Ms. Prospect, I'm Pat Seller with Secure Systems. I understand you are looking into enhancing your protection against server breaches due to stolen credentials (#3 above). We specialize in working with banks to minimize this at the multifactor authentication level, while being in compliance with FFIEC(#1). In fact, after having our system for just a week, one community banking group identified and stopped a breach that would have cost millions (#2). I'd like to ask a couple of questions to see if I could provide some information."**

Of course I made that scenario up, but you get the point.

The language was way over the head of most people, but it was in perfect Status Alignment with the prospect.

While it isn't a straight how-to sales book, I like it, and there are many other concepts that you will likely be able to adapt and adopt for your calls.

☎

*("Micro Commitments," continued from cover page)*

an idea. Ideas are non-threatening. They don't cost money.

And, once they say yes, they are now invested in listening to what you have.

### 5. Recommend Again

Now you make your sales recommendation again, and ask for commitment.

For example,

**"So Mike, based on the math we just did here, it looks like your total cost of ownership would be less with our system, since you feel it will give you a greater return over the longer life of unit, and you won't have the out of pocket maintenance expenses. Given all of that, let's go ahead and move forward with it."**

Again, what's important here is that if you just made that statement before going through the doubt-creation process, technically you could be totally right, factually, but they might not be there yet emotionally, therefore they likely wouldn't buy into the argument. They'd still be in resistant mode.

And again, incorporating the micro-commitment makes it all stronger. Work it into your process.

☎

# Sending Something Before a Prospecting Call; Compelling, or Clutter and Crap?

Here's a 1980's version of a bad prospecting approach:

*"Mr. Russell, I'm Rob Dunlap with Whatever Services. I sent you a letter and brochure last week, and was wondering if you read through that?"*

Here's a 2019 "Sales 2.0." "Social Selling," "Content Marketing" version of a bad prospecting approach:

Voicemail: *"Hi Bob, I'm Rob Dunlap with Whatever Services. I see we are both connected to Pat Ivory. I sent you an InMail with a link to our video on our IQC capabilities and would like to arrange an interactive web demo to go through our various options with you."*

Technology and innovation does not make a poor strategy (or no strategy) and messaging that lacks value any better.

I can shoot just as poorly with my new Callaway Epic as the clunky things I played with in college. (In fact, I have.)

The example above is about a salesperson sending something in advance of speaking with a targeted prospect. Used in those ways, it's as bad of an idea now as it was then.

There are exceptions of course. When some best practices are followed.

Decide whether you're conducting a direct response lead gen campaign, or doing sales

Do you intend that your mail, InMail, email, white paper, video, etc., does the selling for you?

If so, it should be structured as a stand-alone direct response piece. And if that is your strategy, why, then, are you needed? Pay someone minimum-wage to call and say, "We sent you a video. Would you like to place an order?"

We live in an "Ignorance Environment."

Meaning that we all ignore most of the messages that come our way daily. We must. Unless there is something timely and compelling that interrupts our ADD mode. More on that in a sec.

If, however, you want to take the chill off of a prospecting approach, we need to first and foremost have some possible value for the prospect.

And grab attention through messaging that cuts through all of the other noise that screams "Salesperson!"

Here are some steps to take. If you are a practitioner of Smart Calling, this should not look new to you.

## Do Your Homework

Their interest level is in direct proportion to how targeted your message is to them.

**Be a detective.** Do your online searches. Being proficient at all aspects of LinkedIn is no longer an option. And actually not even enough. Check out these other lead and intel tools: SeamlessSmartCalling.com and SmartCallingIntel.com

**Do Social Engineering.** This is calling and asking questions of assistants, screeners, others in the buyer's department, and users of your product or service. For example,

**"I hope you can help me. I'm going to be speaking with your VP of HR and want to be sure that what I'd be discussing would be relevant. Please tell me ..."**

You'll use this information to customize and personalize your preapproach note, voice message, opening statement, and to ask targeted, intelligent questions.

## Draft Your Pre-Approach Messaging

The more personalized, the better, using the information you gleaned from your sleuthing:

**"Mr. Russell, I saw your post in the Facilities Management group on LinkedIn. I understand that you are now in the process of considering an addition to your manufacturing facility and are looking for the latest energy-efficiency options. We compiled a resource list of just that, that another company in your industry used to reduce utility expenses by 30%. Here's the link to it. If you have questions please let me know."**

Discuss the potential results that can be gained by the prospect, not your products or services. Leave them curious.

## Make your Call

Use an opening similar to the wording in the note. Just make these slight changes:

**"Mr. Russell, Rob Dunlap with Whatever Services. I saw your post in the Facilities Management group on LinkedIn and I understand that you are now in the process of considering an addition to your manufacturing facility and are looking for the latest energy-efficiency options. As I mentioned in an InMail message to you, we recently helped another company in your industry reduce utility expenses by 30% If I've reached you at a good time, I'd like to ask a few questions about your plans to see if it would be of mutual benefit to discuss some of the various options for reducing energy expenses."**

Prospects do not want or need, nor will they pay any attention to more irrelevant content, clutter and crapola.

We all, however, will pay attention to something that is compelling. Your job is to determine what that might be, then insert it into a Smart messaging approach.

☎

# Using "Pick Up" Lines In Sales

I know. That headline piqued my curiosity too.

Actually the one I saw atop an article was "5 Spiritual Pick Up Lines to Perk Up Your Relationships."

The article was by syndicated columnist, speaker, and board-certified hospital chaplain, Norris Burkes.

The original article dealt with the "how are you today?" question, which typically elicits the robotic answer, "Fine. You?"

It's a much-debated topic in the phone and sales world since it's used on more calls than not. Burkes explains that the question does not seek an honest answer.

In fact, he says that most people don't want an honest answer. They just want the trite response and then to move on.

### Picks Up Spirits

Instead, Burkes suggests "spiritual pick up" lines that are intended to "pick up" the spirits of the other person.

(And some of you thought this was going in another direction with the pick up lines.)

The lines are actually questions. Great questions in fact.

And especially good for us in sales situations.

I'm modifying the questions slightly for our purposes, and giving some other suggestions.

### 1. "What's new in your world?"

Burkes says this is his favorite since it usually provokes a story about fun, faith, or family.

By modifying it we can get the same result with our customers and prospects.

For example,

**"What's new in your department since we spoke in July?"**

**"What changes have taken place in the past quarter?"**

**"What's new regarding your 2020 Plan?"**

And if they respond with, "Oh, not much," prompt them further with

**"Oh, come on, there must be something..."**

### 2. "Tell me about your..."

Burkes shares a story about his wife, a school teacher, who will say to her young students,"Tell me about your drawing," instead of "What are you drawing?"

It's getting people thinking about observations, not conclusions. That is brilliant!

Also known as "instructional statements," I have suggested their use for years. It's easier for someone to comment on something, than to create it themselves. For example,

**"Tell me about how you handle your downtime issues..."**

**"Describe the process for..."**

**"Tell me about the last time you had a situation where..."**

### 3. "What's your plan today?" Or, "What's your day looking like?"

This hints that you care, and that you want to help. And it sets up the next two questions.

We could use,

**'"What's your plan for the rest of the month regarding...?"**

**"What does your fourth quarter look like as it relates to...?"**

### 4. "How can I help make this a good day for you?"

Burkes suggests that if you really want to know about a person's wellbeing, then you must be willing to help.

These are more general questions, and of course context plays a key role in their effectiveness.

Examples we could use are ,

**"What can we do as a supplier to help?"**

**"How can I help you you reach those goals?"**

**"What could we provide you to accomplish that?"**

### 5. "What are you hoping for?" "What are you praying for?"

The author says that you are accomplishing two things here: You are getting them to examine their greatest needs, and your are entering into a spiritual covenant to help them attain what they want.

While in a business setting we probably would not ask about their praying, we can adapt it to get similar results.

**"What are you hoping most for with this project?"**

**"What do you want the most regarding the outcome?"**

**"What, ultimately do you hope to happen as a result?"**

These are some great "pick up" questions that can get your prospect/customer to really reveal their innermost needs, pains, problems and desires, therefore helping you to help them.

☎

### Responding to a Price Question

In his book, *"Secrets of Great Rainmakers: The Keys to Success and Wealth,"* Jeffrey Fox says that whenever the prospect says the word "price," we need to help them see the lowest **total cost**, not the price.

If the prospect asks, "What is the price?", **give the price** (he says 82% of prospects who ask for the price simply want to know the price. They are not negotiating.)

After giving the price, ask, **"How does that sound?"** If they respond with something like, "Are you kidding? That's more than I thought," follow up with, **"May I show you why this product is actually the lowest-cost solution to your problem?"**

### 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 two things would be good." Of course he complied.

### 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 The Screener's Question

Here's an answer to the screener's "What's this in reference to?" question, as it appears in "SUCCESSFUL COLD CALL SELLING," by Lee Boyan:

**"We are working with many firms similar to yours, with an idea that our clients tell us substantially cuts their operation costs (or whatever general benefit applies to what you sell). In my experience I have found that the president can quickly determine whether or not your company would want to consider this idea. Could I speak with him/her to discuss it?"**

### A Dumb Thing I Hear:

"I don't have time to do pre-call planning. I have to place a lot of calls." Oh really? But you do have time for personal calls, internet surfing, chatting with others, admin stuff that should be delegated, and generally frittering away time during the day? But no time to perform the action that can ensure success, or guarantee failure by its absence? C'mon, everyone has little time thieves that steal from us every day. And we allow them to rob us. Invest more time in planning and you'll see your sales rise.

### 27,375 Days

Speaking of time, if you live to just 75 years old, that's how many days you have on Earth. In an article I read, the author pointed out that number is soberingly small when you really analyze it, keeping in mind that you spend about the equivalent of 8,000 of those days sleeping, leaving even a smaller number. So what's the point here? Given how little time we actually have, how do you make decisions regarding how you invest your time, both on the job and off? Too many people waste time, and many others go through each day, miserable, engaging in activities and being around people they despise. The amount of money you could make is theoretically almost infinite, while the amount of time you have is very finite. Try making decisions with your time based on the ticking-away commodity that it is.

Art Sobczak's
# SMART CALLING REPORT
September 2019 Volume 36 Number 9

# At Which of These Performance Levels Do You Operate? Most are Lower Than They Could Be

This is not a what-to-say sales tip. But it could be life-changing in making the difference in your prospecting and sales success.

I've personally been around tens of thousands of salespeople over the years.

Some–the top performers achieving at the highest level—produce staggering results.

Because they think and DO extraordinary things.

On the other end are the many who just couldn't cut it in sales and either got out on their own, or were asked to leave.

And then there's the middle. Both the low and top of the middle.

These folks pretty much get by, and depending where they are, are either living on the edge, or are relatively comfortable with where they are at.

### You Are Where You Deserve to Be

One thing everyone has in common, at **every** level, is that they are *exactly where they deserve to be.*

Because their results are a direct reflection of their identity, attitude, and subsequent behavior.

I've been studying this all quite a bit over the past year, thanks to transformation coach, Jim Fortin.

There's a lot that goes into all of this, and for now, I want to focus on what I see with sales reps' attitudes regarding their skills, and self development.

I'm always leery of—and often make fun of—general stats that aren't substantiated, or are applied too broadly. But here's one I've seen several times, and can believe based on my own experience:

The typical sales person reads fewer than two sales books per year.

And I know some read none.

They are likely in the "poor performing" category.

Other sales reps take the attitude of, "I've seen this before," when presented with training, or even tips, techniques and ideas on any part of the sales process.

In pretty much every sales group I've worked with of 20 or more, there typically is at least one person there who is bored, disengaged, and non-participative.

They feel being there is a waste of their time. Because they've seen this stuff before (that's their perception initially—often I change it.)

The other interesting thing is that they rarely are the top producers.

Think that's a coincidence?

Not at all.

While listening to one of Jim's podcasts, he addressed this briefly, and I'm going to build and add on to it.

Jim suggested that there is a difference between understanding something, and really knowing it.

I can understand what it's like to give birth to a child. But of course I could never really **know** what it's like.

In sales, you can understand that you should ask open-ended questions to get someone to explain their needs.

But to really KNOW it, we must work on questions to use in different situations, practice reciting them, actually experience using them, getting comfortable with them, and then continually evaluating our performance and making tweaks.

I'm going to add two more categories to this as it relates to sales knowledge and skill, on the front and back end.

See where you reside and where you want to be.

1. Having Heard Something Before.
2. Understanding
3. Knowing
4. Mastering

### 1. Having Heard Something Before

This is a phenomenon that is a bit mind boggling to me. Perhaps it's the ADD-environment we live in today, where so many are looking for the next shiny object. When presented with a concept, skill, or technique, sales reps often say or think, *"I've heard that before,"* and then tune out and shift their limited attention elsewhere.

*(Continued on Page 5)*

# Sales Observations

**A sales rep used a technique with** me that got me thinking, and into a conversation. Although he didn't accomplish his objective (an appointment), and I gave a response that threw him off a bit, I see how it could be useful when used correctly.

The technique in the opening, after saying your name is, **"Does that sound familiar?"**

When he used it with me, I replied, "Why would that sound familiar?"

He stumbled a bit, and then went into what sounded like a general opening that left a lot to be desired.

After analyzing this, I could see how it might work when you use it in a Smart Calling approach. Perhaps sending an email in advance to tease your Possible Value, and also leaving a voice mail with a similar message.

Then, when you finally do reach them live, you could introduce yourself and company, and ask the question like he did.

After likely hearing, "no," then you could continue with, **"I had left a couple of messages about how we specialize in..."** and then you'd continue with your opening.

The reason to even consider using this is the "pattern interrupt" aspect of it. It could cause someone to break out of their "This is a salesperson" frame of mind.

A possible other benefit is that they actually DO remember your previous messages, if they were good (which of course they always are, right?).

**A great question to qualify how** urgent a need or a problem is, and if someone plans on taking action on it is,

**"What's your deadline for getting that fixed?"**

If they already have a fixed date, of course you'll learn that, then you can ask, **"Why is it that date?"**

That will give you very valuable information you can continue to drill down on.

If they say they don't have a deadline, you'd continue to question that as well.

You could get them talking more about the cost of delaying and perhaps help them realize the urgency and need to take action.

Or, you might find out it is not that much of a priority, which is also good since it will indicate how to proceed following up with them.

**One exercise in my sales training** workshops for clients is where we identify the possible motivators of the various levels of decision makers. An area we get into that a lot of training overlooks is what personal needs and desires the prospect has in their position. And these often are stronger than any business motivator.

A question that can uncover a lot of this is, **"How will solving this/fixing this/implementing this, etc. affect you personally?"**

People love talking about their favorite subject—themselves. Make sure you listen, take great notes, and continue questioning when they answer. And then use this when it's time to make your personalized recommendation.

**Here's an interesting suggestion** I saw from Derek Gaunt, a negotiation trainer and personal coach. He suggests that when you encounter a tough gatekeeper (his term for the assistant), you reply with, **"What would have to be true for me to speak with him?"**

That prompts them to go off their typical "get rid of salesperson" script, causes them to think, and in many cases give good information.

**I was talking to a friend about** a business idea he had that sounded awesome for him. I felt he would crush it if he pursued it. However, he had a case of the "Yeahbutts." As in, "Yeah, but what if...?" And he continued coming up with possibilities of why it might not work.

Many of them were far fetched, worst-case scenarios.

As are many of the things we worry about, and that hold us back.

Forget about all the reasons why something may not work. You only need to find one good reason why it will work, and go for it!

Now go and make this your best month ever!

Art

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**SMART CALLING REPORT**
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:

# Q&A

This month Art reaches into the mailbag and answers questions from readers.

### Creating Interest With Doctors

Art, I have a position involving contacting Chiropractors and MD's to see if they, a) Use portable medical equipment in their practice, and, b) if they are interested in having units on consignment to provide for their patients.

My question is when speaking to a very busy client such as this, what would be the BEST technique to use. I would never be pushy, but I don't want to come across as complacent in my delivery. I have the ability to get past the "Gatekeeper" by being their friend. But a doctor is different in that they are taking their valuable time to listen to me. It is my job to get and keep their interest.

*Mike Hamernik*

### *Art's Response*

Mike, the key here, as with any call, in getting and keeping interest is determining what it is about your equipment and providing it to their patients that would be of interest, and why. Then you need to plug that into an opening so that they will then answer your questions.

I would assume the main motivators here would be patient convenience—and let's be realistic—revenue they keep instead of refer elsewhere.

Therefore you might consider something like,

**"Dr. Sawbones, depending on what you're now doing with patients who require in-home equipment for their surgery rehab, we might have a simple way for you to make it easier for your patients to acquire the equipment, and generate additional income for your practice...** *(pause)* **how do you handle these situations now?"**

Then, your goal is to get them talking about their situation, learning what they do, how they do it, and how much revenue they might be earning for someone else.

And of course, if you can do some Social Engineering in advance that will give you some insight as to what they are doing now.

### What to Do When You Are Emotionally Drained

Art, I don't mean to sound like a whiner, but here lately I feel just mentally drained. You get (or I do) tired of hearing that people are not in, or you get voice mail, or they say nothing when you are trying to ask questions and engage them in a conversation. I think I am pretty decent at telephone sales, but like I say, I just feel drained here lately (emotionally, mentally, physically). I wonder sometimes if I take things personally when people reject my offers... Is there any good way to separate it in your mind as someone made a "business decision" and not a "personal decision about me"?

*Pat Olsen*

### *Art's Response*

Pat, a couple of suggestions:

**1. Do things differently.** If you want different results, change your approach. Analyze where you're not happy with what's happening, seek out new ideas, then practice and try them. Just the process of getting new info is motivating, and even more so when you see the results.

**2. Set a Secondary Objective for every call.** I define that as , "At minimum, what can you accomplish?" For example, simply getting a decision on each call, yes or no. Or at least finding out why you got the no. And judge success not on just the yes answers, but on your attempts.

**3. Change your definition of "rejection."** Rejection is not an experience, it's your *definition* of the experience. Rejection is not what happens to you, it is how you define and react to what happens to you. You will always get no's. Stuff happens. If it's not, you're not in the game. So change your definition! Do not associate a no with rejection. Keep in mind that no one can reject you without your consent.

☎

# How to Get Referrals

Do you have so many referrals that you do not have time to call them all?

Crazy question, I know. Most people have very few referrals. Why? They do not ask for them. And just asking is not enough. You need to ask in the right way to maximize the number, and quality of prospects you receive.

Martyn Hotchkiss was asking for referrals, and regularly meeting a brick wall. Here is what he was saying.

*"Do you know of anyone else who could be interested in our products and services?"*

He'd hear responses like, "Not really," or, "Can't think of anyone at the moment."

And, really, that question invites the easy response from the customer.

Martyn changed his approach and has found more success by "preframing" the question by leading up to it with a short series of closed questions:

**"Mr. Buyer, In your job as ___, you will meet a lot of other people with similar jobs at seminars and conferences, don't you?"**

"Yes"

**"And some of these will have the same sorts of needs as you?"**

"Yes"

**"In fact, you probably discuss these types of products with each other to find out the good ones and the bad ones, don't you?"**

"Yes"

**"Of those people you know, are there any who have been interested in these products?"**

Martyn usually doesn't have to ask who these other people are, because at this point, they are already thinking of them, and the names seem to pop out!

☎

# Be a Mystery Novelist With Your Voice Mails

Have you read any novels by John Grisham, Tom Clancy, Anne Perry, Nelson DeMille or perhaps Patricia Cornell?

They have the uncanny ability to draw you in, to get you to read the next paragraph, the next page and the chapter beyond even though it is well past midnight.

Why?

Because they are masters at intrigue. Intrigue is defined as "mystery, suspense; to spark interest or curiosity."

At the end of every chapter, these authors leave you with an unanswered question, a moment of suspense, a sense of expectation.You can't help but read on.

## Voice Mail Novelists

When prospects pick up their voicemail, they are, in effect, picking up a "book" and leafing through the pages. Something must catch their eye…er…ear.

In a way, you must become a master of intrigue when it comes to leaving a voice mail.

You must become the Grisham or Cornell of voice mail! You must leave your prospect hungry for more. He or she must want to pick up that phone in the telephony equivalent of turning to the next page. How do you do this?

## Intrigue Builders

Writing a good novel is essentially a matter of technique. So too is leaving a voice mail. After leaving your name and your company here are some "techniques" or statements that leave your prospect curious for more.

**"I Need Your Help…"** This statement has proven to be very effective in getting prospects to call back. It looks like this:

**"Mr. Gandara, I need your help with some research I am doing on safety issues and I am told you are the resident expert…"**

There are three things that work with this statement. The first is that the word "help" appeals to the average individual. It is not threatening and it certainly doesn't sound like a sales pitch.

Secondly, intrigue is created by forcing the recipient to ask: "What kind of help?" "Why?" "What's this all about?"

Finally, the phrase flatters. By stating that the prospect is the "resident expert," the prospect feels important.

**"I Have An Idea…"** I have used the "idea" opener"in other scenarios in sales and it works extremely well because it leaves the recipient asking the question, "What idea?"

For instance: "**Ms. Ackerman, I have an idea that I would like to run by you that might significantly impact your quality control program…"**

It creates intrigue in much the same manner as the "I need your help."

The prospect is forced to wonder the precise nature of the idea. That it significantly impacts quality control makes it all the more interesting.

**"A Question…"** This is a new one for me. I like it and wish that I had developed it, but the credit goes to Tom Freese, author of *"The Secrets of Questions Based Selling."*

**"Dr. Tuori, I have a question that I believe only you can answer concerning carpal tunnel syndrome…"**

The fact that only the recipient can answer the question is intrigue enough. The prospect thinks, "What question? Why me?"

**"The Insider…"** Here's another one I have seen used in various forms. The insider referral leverages the expertise, title or position of someone within your company and creates a unique sense of intrigue.

.**"Mr. Jackson, Dr. Carrigan, the head of our Marketing Development Division, suggested I give you a call concerning employee productivity…"**

The intrigue here is twofold. First,the reference to "Doctor" Carrigan" is powerful.

A doctor? What kind of doctor? What is this about? Why should a doctor want me to call?

Second, the reference to productivity is an implied benefit. But it is not precisely clear and it nags like a persistenct itch.

To scratch it you have to call.

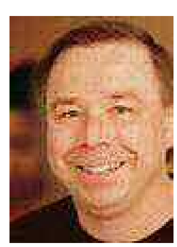
Not every company has a doctor on staff, so another variation of this voicemail statement is,

**"…Mr. Edgerton, our president, suggested I give you a call…"**

"The "president" is a powerful title and generally gets the attention of the listener.

**Summary**

Learn to be a master of intrigue. Craft your messages and try them.Test variations and see what works best for you. Maybe you'll create your own "best seller."



*(Jim Domanski is President of the Telemanagement Consulting Group, a telemarketing consulting and training firm. Contact him at 613-591-1998)*

*(continued from cover page)*

As if having heard something before means we can check it off of the list. Kind of like, *"Yep, I had my measles shot when I was a kid. that's out of the way."*

I can't count how many times someone has asked me, "Do you have any new sales techniques?" Or, "What advanced sales skills do you have?"

And what I am almost always thinking is, "How well are you executing the fundamentals?"

Usually, not very well.

Perhaps you have heard this before, and if so, good: "Repetition is the mother of all learning."

The next time you hear or read about a sales skill, technique, strategy or approach and your inclination is to think, "I've heard this before," stop. Ask yourself,

**"How well am I doing that?"** Or

**"What could I do to get better in that area?"**

## 2. Understanding

This is similar to the previous level, except it is more dangerous. It is when people actually *think* they have a grasp of something. Then they close themself down to further learning and improvement.

And worse is the result of this: they don't really use or implement what they know.

A simple example is someone who goes through a training program and learns the concepts of a good opening statement/voice mail. He/she could probably even explain it to someone else.

But then, when they get on the phone, they fall back into their old default mode. Reciting the same old words that don't get the results they really want.

I know I've been guilty of this. A lot.

I've spent substantial money on training programs and courses on different aspects of marketing for my business over the years. Sure, I've implemented a lot, but nowhere near all of the things that I "understood" but didn't take action on.

To get to the next level really relies on **action** regarding what you understand.

## 3. Knowing

Think of the things you consider yourself really good at, either physically or mentally, or a combination of both. Cooking, putting together parties, getting discounts on everything you buy, movie trivia, fixing things around the house, or hopefully, any or all aspects of sales and prospecting.

These are things that you really know.

Because you worked at building and refining your knowledge and skill.

The late David Sandler wrote the book, *"You Can't Teach a Kid to Ride a Bike at a Seminar."* Of course that was referring to the notion that someone can't learn selling just by sitting through a presentation where the instructor is just talking about sales.

You have to **do it**. Regularly.

I did a bit of research on what "knowing" something really means. My eyes glazed over with the philosophical explanations from Socrates, Sartre, Kant, and other old dead guys whose names I barely remember from college.

However, a couple did resonate, and are in a language most people can understand:

Knowledge is...

**Interpretation (or memory) that produces power.**

Also, it's

**The ability to reproduce or reconstruct something.**

Everyone is capable of knowing what it takes to be excellent at prospecting and sales.

Most don't reach this level, sadly.

And their results reflect it.

## 4. Mastery

Mastery is not actually a level, but a mindset.

A journey, not a destination.

It isn't something you can actually achieve, because you can always get better at anything.

The highest achievers in anything see themselves as apprentices.

It's a way of thinking about and working toward goals rather than an end goal itself.

And if someone believes they have something mastered, that's when they stall, and even regress.

Watching those at this level—in pursuit of mastery— is a joy to behold. They make their performance look effortless and flawless.

When people say, "She is a natural," or "He is a born salesman," they really have no idea.

There's the story of Picasso, sketching in the park. A woman recognizes him and begs for him to sketch her portrait. He agrees, takes a couple of minutes, and hands her the result, which she loves. She asks how much she owes him.

He replies, "Five thousand dollars."

She is outraged, and asks how that could be, since it only took him a couple of minutes.

Without missing a beat, he responds with, "No, madame, it took me my entire life."

Mastery takes time. It is not for the "Look, squirrel!" crowd.

It requires intention and attention. Practice. Repetition. Acquisition of information. Accountability. Input from others.

Rinse and repeat.

What I have always loved about sales is that in no other profession is your impact and reward virtually unlimited. The ceiling only is as high as you perceive it. And for those in pursuit of mastery, they can't even see one.

Hopefully that is you.

Again, there isn't a single sales tip you can recite to a prospect or customer in this piece. But hopefully it has caused you to look at where you are right now, raised questions about where you could be, and sparked the desire and action to move to the next level.

# How to Effectively Ask About and Discuss Budgets

Anyone who has been involved in building a house will vouch that you rarely end up spending what you thought you would when first starting.

Another electrical outlet here, nicer fixtures there...what the heck, let's get the better carpet. While we're at it, expand the deck to multi-levels with the built in benches-easier now than later.

Before you know it, your original "budget" looks as close to what you'll actually spend as your take-home pay looks compared to your actual gross wages.

So, what dynamic is at work here?

Emotion.

Rationally and logically you believe you could spend "x" for the house.

Mix in your emotions—along with the desires of the spouse, kids, future kids, and suddenly you're up to "x+++".

The "budget" seems so arbitrary. What you really WANT wrestles control from the logical you.

The same principles apply with your prospects and customers.

Which is why, for many sales reps, asking a question like, "What do you have budgeted?" is sales disaster. Because, simply accepting their figure can cause you to miss out on sales and profits.

Add to the fact that saying "Our budget is all gone," is an easy and effective way to get rid of sales reps.

For example, let's take an advertising sales rep. He asks, *"So what do you have budgeted for advertising this year?"*

The prospect answers, "$5,000, and it's already spoken for."

Then the rep is left to either try and talk the person out of what they're already doing, or just meekly asking, *"When should I call you again for the next budget year?"*

Instead, the rep would be much better off NOT even bringing up budget, but prompting the prospect to think about what he really wants. Really, that's the only reason for advertising anyway.

For example,

**"Tell me about what you're looking to do this year regarding new product introductions."**

**"What sales figures do you really want to hit?"**

Notice these questions get the customer thinking and talking about results. Advertising is simply a means of getting those results.

If the sales rep can stoke enough desire and excitement in the customer's mind, and then make a sensible recommendation—naturally including the rep's advertising—then the budget falls by the wayside, victim to emotion.

Oh, I understand this doesn't apply to everyone in all situations.

I'm primarily referring to instances where you're talking to a key decision maker who likely has the authority to overrule a budget, or instances where a "budget" is more of a range or guideline than a strict figure that is written in concrete.

If this principle applies to you, you probably know it. If you believe it doesn't, think again; who sets the budget, why, and who has the power to work outside of it when they want to?

## DO Ask About Money

And I'm not suggesting you don't ask about money—you should.

You usually need to find out what range you're dealing with in order to determine if you're in the same ballpark.

For example,

**"Mike, I want to be sure we're both on the same page here regarding what you're looking for. What range of investment did you have in mind for this project?"**

**"So that I can make the best recommendation for your situation, give me some idea of dollar range you were initially thinking about."**

Notice that these questions talk more about a *range,* and not a strict budget.

This way, you can qualify them, but yet not limit your chances.

## When Budget Is A Real Objection

If you do a great job of selling value, budgets usually aren't an issue.

But, realistically of course, the budget objection might indeed be a real roadblock.

You need to become a problem solver, a detective, to help the prospect come up with the money to buy your product or service.

Some of the questions mentioned earlier that we do not want to ask in the general part of a call are more appropriate here.

First, whenever you hear the budget problem, you need to be sure that the prospect is PERSONALLY sold on what you are offering.

Otherwise, there is no way they are going to do what's necessary to locate the money. For example,

**Prospect**: "Everything looks great. Problem is, we just don't have the money in the budget."

**Caller: "I see. Let's talk about that. Let me be clear first. Mike, I'm assuming that this is something that you personally are totally sold on, and you really would like to do something now, right?"**

***(Continued on next page)***

*(Continued from previous page)*

If they say "no," their commitment isn't strong enough yet.

Before even addressing the budget concern, you need to sell them on the value so that they'll "go to bat" for you. If they agree, the next step is simply a series of questions.

Here are some examples:

**"When is your budget year over?"**

**"When do you need to put requests in for the next budget?"**

**"How much money do you have in the budget under this category?"**

**"Which other categories might we be able to list this expense under?"**

**"Any other departments that would benefit from the purchase and might be able to share in the expense?"**

**"What do you typically do when there is something you really want, and the funds are not budgeted?"**, or,

Whenever you can come up with a precedent, it's much easier to answer the objection.

**"What have you done before when you've run into similar situations?"**

**"The last time you had a situation where you found something that would give a return on investment like this but did not have it budgeted, what did you do?"**

By asking these questions and others, the creative juice begins flowing.

They are thiking of ways they can get what they really want.

Treating the objection as it really is, a problem, you are both able to search for win-win ways to solve it.

# An Old Salesy Technique, With a Twist that Makes it OK

There are many old sales techniques that you'll still see being suggested (usually by people repeating something they read, but aren't using themselves.)

One such technique that I've made quite a bit of fun of over the years is a response to the Resistant Reflex Response of "I'm not interested" right at the beginning of a call.

The old response is, "Of course you are not interested, because I haven't told you yet what I have."

I saw a LinkedIn post the other day from Anuj Pillai who writes a sales blog.

When I first saw the response I rolled my eyes as usual, but continued reading.

I was surprised that he had a suggestion that is actually pretty good.

Here's the entire suggestion in the post:

____________________

**Prospect:** I am not interested.

**Sales Rep:** I understand and agree with you that there won't be any interest at the moment, because I have not yet provided any information for you to see value in talking with me.

Now, if you give me 30 seconds, I will brief you on how we have transformed C (C = your client who is your prospects competitor) in I (I = Industry same as your prospect is in) in achieving R (R = Results in terms of monetary value) by doing W (W = Work you do). Then, if you are not interested even after listening to me for 30 seconds, you will never hear from me again! Sound fair? Shall I proceed?

Then he suggested moving on with your pitch and appointment request

I am still not a fan of the first part of the response, about not having yet provided anything of value. I feel that is a waste of words and valuable time.

The real power here is in the explanation.

That gives the WHY.

Personally, I would leave out the first part, and simply say, **"That's OK. But with just 30 seconds I can let you know how..."** And then give the explanation.

By the way, if you re-read the previous paragraph, I use two words that some people suggest you never use: "but" and "just."

BUT, if you examine how they are used, they are entirely appropriate here. Which shows that context matters.

## This Adds Credibility

I heard a compelling commercial for a car dealer in Phoenix. What especially grabbed me was, **"Our salespeople on not paid on commission, they are paid on total volume of cars we sell. We guarantee the lowest price anywhere. So if you buy a car somewhere else, you are paying too much."**

The credibility statement here of not being on commission is what really makes this work. Don't get me wrong; I believe getting paid based on what you produce is the greatest thing in the world. But if you are not on commission, it removes skepticism. Research has proven that. For example,

"**And Joe, I'm not paid on commission, so you can be certain this is a purely objective recommendation."**

**"Really, it doesn't matter one way or another to me personally which option you choose, since I don't stand to gain anything from it commission-wise. I just feel so strongly that's it's the best choice for your situation."**

### Include a Compliment in the Referral Opening

When calling a referral, include some personal information from the person who referred you. Preferably a compliment.

This starts the call on a real positive. A sales rep did this on a call to me, and I found myself in a more receptive frame of mind, and I realized why afterward. For example,

**"Hi Dan, I'm Kelly Stevens with Info Supply. Bob Russell at Muffler Industries suggested I give you a call. He said some great things about you, particularly how you have ..."**

### Dealing With Unresponsive People

Remember the last time you ran into an "unresponsive?" You know the types. The people who are very stingy with their words and emotions.

Some unresponsives act that way intentionally to show their resistance.

Others are naturally quiet, and are very deliberate listeners, carefully analyzing everything you have to say.

Some may not be listening at all, and might be engaged in some other activity, such as writing, or making comments to a person in their office.

When speaking with unresponsives, resist the temptation to talk faster. Typically, reps become self-conscious when faced with silence, and start rambling on about features, bouncing from point to point. Some people get so flustered, they freeze up, or become tongue-tied, reducing their presentation to meaningless babble.

Stay calm, and stimulate the prospect to respond. Get them involved. Ask questions such as

**"How do you feel about...?"**, or

**"What are your feelings on...?".**

### Manage Priorities, Not Time

In the great movie *"The Pursuit of Happyness"* Chris Gardener had to do in six hours as a stockbroker trainee (cold caller) what everyone else did in 10, because he had to get home and take care of his little boy.

He calculated how much time in a day he spent picking up and putting down the phone, so he simply pushed the disconnect button down with his hand instead of putting the handset down. This saved a few precious minutes per day to make more calls with.

Get this: he also avoided water and coffee so he wouldn't have to go to the bathroom as much!

The real point here is that time management is really priority management. If you want to get something done, you will. If you want to place more calls, you will find a way.

### Responding to "I already work with someone"

And speaking of *"The Pursuit of Happyness,"* Terry Ward, sent me an email with a great quote from the book, on which the movie is based. Gardener said that when a prospect stated they were satisfied with their current broker, he replied with **"I understand you've got a broker. Now we're not interested in interfering with that relationship. However, we would like to be able to complement that relationship by showing you one or two special situations here."** Pretty good, and adaptable to most industries.

### Conference Call Tip

When you schedule a conference sales call and there will be several decision makers you have not yet spoken with, ask your primary contact for a rundown on them, their backgrounds, interests, etc. Ask whether any of them already have a preferred vendor or favor any of the other presenters. Sell your contact as much as you can before the presentation. Ask them if they will be in your corner.

Art Sobczak's

# SMART CALLING REPORT

October 2019 Volume 36 Number 10

# How to Get the Attention of Busy Buyers

How many attempts to get your attention did you ignore already today?

Online, print and broadcast ads, emails, billboards, phone calls, the guy spinning a sign on the street corner, a lady pushing samples at the grocery story... the attempts are endless.

As a society we have become "professional ignorers."

We have to be.

Now, just think of the decision makers **you** want as customers. You could probably 10x the number of attempts to get their attention they receive each day.

But yet, as sales pros who need new business, we still must figure out how to break through the noise.

And, despite what you might hear from those selling the next shiny object Social/Sales Enablement/AI tool or method, buyers are still talking to humans who manage to get their attention.

How do we do that?

I'm going to explore that with you. Granted, many of these are not new, and I've covered them many times.

And they still work. And are more important than ever. Plus, repetition is the mother of all learning.

I'm also sharing a few other strategies, techniques and processes that can work in conjunction with some of the basics. Let's dive in.

### Have Relevant Value

This is such a "Well duh, no kidding" point. And also the one most violated by salespeople. Which causes them to go down in flames.

Value is not the thing or stuff you sell. It is always the perceived result obtained by the buyer.

"Perceived" is the key word, along with "relevant," since it is always what they think it is, not what your marketing department says on your website.

This is something you don't hear much: perceived personal value is not a constant for individuals. I've had sales directors call me in a panic, needing sales training right now! Because they just got out of a meeting with their boss, threatening bad things if they didn't hit their new business quota next quarter. That same person ignored my promotions for sales training for the eight years they were on my list, and never had purchased anything. MY offering of value didn't change, their perception did.

So how do we help someone perceive our possible value as relevant. See the next point.

### Personalize and Customize Your Messaging

This is the "smart" in Smart Calling.

Consider this scenario: I put two large envelopes on a table, and I say the blue one contains a description of how people have doubled the money in their retirement account.

The red one is a detailed study of how, based on your existing retirement accounts, your income, your lifestyle, your goals, and your dreams, you personally could potentially double the amount you have on the summary page of the account statement in that envelope.

Which one would be of interest to you?

Obviously we are all mostly interested in us.

Problem is, many salespeople don't suspend that feeling when they call prospects.

Woody Allen reportedly said—there are variations—that *"80% of success is showing up."*

While it's true we still need to show up and make calls, just because we call and ask for 15 minutes of someone's time is a recipe for failure. Unless we have personalized, customized, relevant possible value.

This value messaging applies to all of the following points. The more personalized, customized and therefore, relevant, your emails, InMails, voicemails, videos, audios, notes, and everything else you communicate is, the more impact you will have.

## Specific Tactics

Here are tactics you can adapt and use to grab attention.

### Send Something Physical

Emails and voicemails are easy to delete, as we all do every day. But when something shows up in a box or a puffy envelope at our home or office, it gets our attention.

I received a FedEx box from Google. Of course I ripped it open right away. It was a notebook computer case, along with a note saying they would like to give me the Chromebook computer that went in the case.

*(Continued on Page 3)*

# Sales Observations

**Smart Calling Facebook** Community member Mike Herberts shared this technique as a way to learn where we stand with a hard-to-reengage prospect and get movement.

**"Just wondering where to go with this Mr. Prospect…my system gives me three options…close the file permanently, close it temporarily or …keep it open for awhile… what would be the best option for you and me at the moment?"**

He says that doesn't come across as needy and it gets great results.

**A reader informed me that** someone posted online somewhere that me claiming you could prospect without rejection was bogus, and impossible.

Obviously he had not read any of my stuff. Here's what I would tell him (I didn't see the post):

"Rejection" is not an experience. It is always how you DEFINE the experience. "Rejection" is a BS story you tell yourself. "Rejection" is simply your thoughts about what happened on a call, or worse, what you are afraid might happen on a call.

You are in complete control of your thoughts. Since you have a choice, why in the world would you choose to label something as "rejection?"

Don't let thoughts about a past experience--or fear of what you might experience-- affect your actions (calling), that is depriving you, your family, and your possible future customers of the good that comes when you sell (help) others. Just Place the Call!

**The debate about using small** talk, "How are you?" etc. is never ending.

Edward Totland shared one of the little tricks that works for him.

He does a simple introduction following the Smart Calling format then interrupts himself from going any further, and says, "**Did I get your name right? Is it pronounced, Sub-Check?"**

Then regardless of what they say he says his name looks simple but people get it wrong all the time, Tot-land!

Then he just gets back on track with his opening statement.

Edward says when you admit a tiny bit of stupidity in a certain area it brings you down to earth in their mind. It's a type of humanizing comment that we can all relate to and it briefly breaks the ice and lowers the resistance wall.

**I called a training inquiry where** things were not progressing, the prospect was a bit wishy-washy and non-committal and I could tell she wasn't the ultimate decision maker. She asked, "Can you send a proposal?" I asked, **"Are we really to that point yet?"** She said, "Well, not really."

We agreed she had more homework to do before we would speak again. Had I put together a proposal, of course that would have taken time, and it would have been wasted time. That one question saved me tons of time, and money, like it has many times.

How can you write more agreements and cut down on needless bids, proposals and quotes?

**At the grocery deli counter, the** guy greeted me with, "What can I help you with pal?" "After pointing out the cheese I wanted: "This one bud?" "He showed me a sample: "OK, chief?" "Then, "What else boss?" "He handed it to me: "There you go my friend." "As I left: "Take it easy dude." "Need I even comment on this exchange? I mention it because I sometimes hear similar things on phone calls, although not to this extent I admit. Pal, dude, chief, boss, bro, my friend, buddy…perhaps those terms have an appropriate place with a good friend in a casual conversation, but my feeling is that they annoy most others.

**Now is the best time to ensure** you end the year strong... not during the past couple of weeks! And, if you are going to hit your yearly number early, this is no time to coast! Start laying theg groundwork for your amazing year in 2020. You've got this!

Go and make this your best month ever!

Art

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**SMART CALLING REPORT**
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:

(Continued from Cover Page)

All I had to do was book a meeting with one of their G-Suite sales execs to review their offerings. Now, I was thinking Google must know something about me that I didn't, since I don't consider myself a huge prospect for their offerings (I already pay them monthly for some.)

I booked the meeting, spoke with the rep, we concluded I was not a prospect, and she had the computer delivered. (I'm a Google shareholder, and I'm assuming there is a huge return on investment with this strategy... It's all about total lifetime return on investment.)

I could give you lots of examples of how to do this, but one guy has already specialized in it. Stu Heinecke even coined a term for it: "Contact Marketing."

Get his books, *"How to Get a Meeting with Anyone,"* and the new *"Get the Meeting,"* to get hundreds of ideas on how you can send something simple, or engage in a multi-step campaign to grab attention and create interest.

### Mention a Referral

When a prospect hears or sees the name of someone they know and respect at the beginning of your messaging, that sparks attention.

Nothing new here. Just a solid strategy that still works at all levels.

Of course the key is *getting* referrals.

Most people do not ask for them.

The script is pretty simple: **"Pat, who else do you know who (problem you solved for them) who would benefit from getting (the same results they did)?"**

### Highlight Uncommon Commonalities

When we're in our home team sports stadium and there are 40,000 others all wearing the team gear, we don't feel compelled to strike up conversations with all of them. But when I was in Italy, and I passed a guy wearing a Nebraska Cornhuskers hat, I had to stop him and talk.

I've written that we can prospect fellow alumni and use that as a tool of similarity in the connection part of our opening. But we can take that much further if we both had the same quirky Economics professor and had experience with his crazy "graphs and laughs" assignment.

Of course you won't be able to use this one with most people, but with the ones you can, it is golden.

### Express Gratitude

It's human nature to favorably view someone who thanks us for something. You can do it in your messaging. You might not have personally received something from your prospect, but you can thank them for a valuable article or post, something that they or their company has done or is doing. Of course this must be genuine and sincere.

### Give Compliments

This is similar to gratitude, and doubly powerful when coupled with it. **"First Mr. Prospect, I'd like to thank you for your LinkedIn post on how professional salespeople must focus on quality rather than quantity. That was very well-written, and something that all organizations need to hear."**

### Show Up in Their Social Media

If your prospect is active on social, let your name be seen there.

**Comment on their posts.** Compliment and thank them there.

**"Like" their posts.** I had one company who had several of their people retweeting my posts for a couple of weeks. It piqued my curiosity and I checked them out.

**Give a review.** If you use their product or service, give a review. This will be more effective with smaller organizations or where you are speaking with the person responsible for ratings and reviews.

**Tag them appropriately.** You have to be very judicious here. When you put out something and it would be of particular interest to a specific prospect, tag them so they are notified about it. Again, be sure it is extremely relevant for them.

I get annoyed when I get tagged along with 20 other sales experts by someone who is just looking to create conversation.

### Look, a Flying Pizza is Outside!

That headline is a "pattern interrupt." Something that is designed to interrupt our pattern of thinking.

Let me preface all of this by saying I don't suggest it as a long-term, consistent go-to strategy. And, it needs to fit with your comfort level of delivery. Or else it can come across as gimmicky or goofy, and actually create resistance.

An example of this is saying right at the beginning of a prospecting call, **"First, I need to let you know this is a cold call. Would you like to hang up now."**

Again, I don't recommend it for everyone, but for some unicorns it works.

Other examples right at the very begining of calls, even before introducing yourself, that I've heard (but not tried myself):

**Ask an unusual question:** "Mike, is the noise hurting your sales team?"

**Make an unusual statement:** "Cheryl, I'm more concerned then ever about where the industry is going."

The goal here is to jar someone into curiosity, and then for best results, continue with your possible value statement, and move into the questioning.

### Personalized Video

An email containing an image and personalized value message indicating you have made a video just for them can be very effective.

Services such as Vidyard, Loom, BombBomb and Soapbox by Wistia make it easy to shoot a video from your desktop and send it in an email.

Jason Bay of Blissful Prospecting showed how he did this with me on the Inner Circle September webinar to get my attention, and on my podcast.

I do it myself. It is not difficult, it's actually fun, and it does get results.

This list is not all-inclusive, of course. It does, however, contain strategies and tactics that are working right now to get the attention of buyers. Which ones will you adapt and implement?

☎

# Jim Breaks Down a Blown Call--His Own

Here's an old Polish proverb taught to me by my grandfather: *"If you have to eat crow, it is best to eat it while it is young and tender. Crow does not get better with age."*

Translation: when you are wrong or when you make a mistake, it is best to acknowledge/admit it right up front. The real point is to deal with the issue as soon as possible. Avoiding it or delaying it only makes the matter worse.

What are you talking about, Jimbo? I am talking about my annual blunder: that time of year, when, despite years and years of training, knowledge, experience, and expertise, I blow a call. And I mean *really* blow it. It happened last week. Let me tell you about it and let's learn from the experience. (Actually, I need to purge myself and confess. The Jesuit priests in my youth obviously had an impact.)

## The Hot Lead

I received a hot lead from a colleague. The client wanted training for a sales conference for their inside reps. I questioned intently. I listened. I learned of the needs and the depth and the breadth of those needs. They wanted a proposal. I delivered. Darn good pricing. Powerful copy. Enticing and exciting, if I do say so myself. I made the follow up call in the prescribed period of time. Got voice mail but I employed my famous (well, it's not famous yet but one day) "4/3 strategy" of follow up voice mails. I did all that I should and maybe even more. A sure thing. A cinch.

Or so I thought…

On the third follow up call I reached the prospect, established rapport and went for the close. Heck I followed the book from beginning to end. The prospect replied:

"Oh, well, we decided not to include that portion of the training."

Ever-savvy Jimbo replied,

"Oh, okay, well, thank you."

## Jim Carey Screams

Did you ever see "Ace Ventura, Pet Detective," starring Jim Carey? He utters a word in the movie that has been screaming in my head ever since the moment. That word? Loser.

I am being somewhat dramatic and I really haven't beaten myself black and blue but it was a nice little wake up call.

## Analysis

I did a lot of things right. I established rapport, I questioned, I presented a strong message selling message, I followed up and I closed. But there are two things I did not do; two things that most sales reps are guilty of at some point in time.

## Pre Call Planning

First, I did not bother to plan my call. I was so confident of getting the sale I did not take pen to paper and plan the call. I assumed the sale was a shoo- in. I got "cocky" or maybe a better way to put it was that I got lazy.

I wasn't prepared for the prospect's remarks. I was totally caught off guard. I did not have prepared a secondary objective nor did I even remotely think about an objection.

## Handling Objections

Okay, so I did not prepare. That doesn't really excuse the second blunder. I did not bother to handle the objection. I accepted it at face value.

The question now is, why did they decide not to go with the training? Was it my price? Was it the training proposal? Was it me? Was there a competitor who hit the nail on the head? Did the budget run out? Heck, I don't know.

## Two Questions

My father taught me a lesson once a long time ago when I screwed up on something. Dad said to ask myself a question:

**"So what did you learn from all this?"**

And that's my real point. I am not a "loser." I simply screwed up. I made a mistake. That happens. It will happen to you sooner or later. And that's okay. It is okay to blow calls and make mistakes.

But what is not okay is to ignore the lesson that can be learned from the mistake.

That cannot be forgiven. That really deserves the moniker "loser."

Every time you miss a sale, go back and review it closely and ask yourself "What can I learn from this?" Keep a notebook and call it "Lessons I have Taught Myself." Record your impression. Toss your hurt feelings aside and be absolutely honest with yourself and analyze the moment. Sometimes you **really** screw up. Learn from it. Don't beat yourself up because that's an utter waste of time. Try not to do it again. If you do, record it again. And again if necessary. Check your "Lessons" book from time to time and see if there's a pattern. Fix it. Sometimes you don't screw up. Write down what you learned from the moment anyway. Learn from it. Who knows maybe you can write your own book one day.

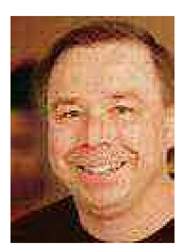
The next question my dad would ask is this;

**"So, what are you going to do about it."**

Dad was saying that it is fine to do an analysis. But that wasn't enough. The next step was to figure out what you should do next. Sometimes the next step is to do nothing. But more often than not, it means you have to do some uncomfortable things. Do them.

As for me, I plan to eat my crow next week. I will send the client this article with a note explaining what I have done. I will make the follow up call and learn from it.

Good Selling.



*(Jim Domanski is President of the Telemanagement Consulting Group, a telemarketing consulting and training firm. Contact him at 613-591-1998)*

# Think About This, Instead of Call Outcomes to Be More Motivated and Fearless

I was talking to a sales pro who was struggling with just picking up the phone.

She believed in her product, was personally sold on the value it delivered--which was much more than the price.

She also has invested in herself and her skills, and is fairly proficient in the Smart Calling process (we always can get better). She's fairly new to prospecting, although has lots of experience in working with customers.

So what was the problem?

### Outcome Attachment

She was too attached to the **outcomes** of calls.

Huge mistake!

If you do that, you are destined to roll up into the fetal position and crawl under the covers.

Why?

You WILL get no's. People will ignore you. You will lose deals. People will lie to you.

Big deal. So what. Who cares? Next.

And, you can't be desperate to get the next deal. That is a certain repellent.

Instead, be attached to the **process, and your activity.** THOSE are the things you control. When you are committed to what you are doing, and how you are doing it, the results follow.

Be attached to WHO you are. You need to define that. You need to BE that. For example,

"**I am a committed, top producing sales pro who helps thousands of people.**"

This is not woo-woo stuff folks. It is proven.

And you need to be attached to what you really VALUE... for example, perhaps earning at a high level so you can provide the lifestyle for you and your family that you REALLY want. So that you can help more people through the charitable causes you support, etc.

Never let the thought of a "no" be bigger than of what you value and who you are. When you put that in perspective, it really is ridiculous to worry about silly no's, isn't it?

If this resonates with you--like it did with the sales pro I mentioned--re-read it. Several times. Apply it to yourself. Let the lights go on.

And take that action. Just place the call. ☎

### Quick Motivation Tips

✔ Accept that you won't have a 100 percent success rate. What, do you expect to get a yes on every call? That's absurd, right. But wait, every time you don't, you're going to beat yourself up by saying you got rejected. That's insanity, and a sure way to hate your job. Major league baseball players don't get hits most of the time. Yet even the worst ones still make millions. Likewise, you don't need to hit your primary objective every time to be a superstar, do you?

✔ Quit identifying what happens to you on sales calls as "rejection." Instead, try something you can control, or at least have hope for.

**"What I said didn't work this time."**

**"The timing wasn't right."**

**"It wasn't a fit for him."**

✔ After every call where you didn't accomplish your primary objective, ask yourself the very important learning question, "What could I have done differently?" You CAN get something positive out of every situation. And if something isn't working, fix it. ☎

# Focus on What You WANT to Happen

While I'm at it, let's make this page all about your motivation and fearlessness.

Even if you don't follow golf, you can be inspired by the winner of this year's US Open.

Gary Woodland held on to the lead to win the tournament. And he did it with nerves of steel, pulling off a few incredible shots to do so. Including a chip shot from one part of the green to another on the 17th hole that most occasional golfers would have muffed miserably.

Personally, I would have put that shot 50 yards into the Pacific ocean which was behind the green.

### The Sales Lesson

Here's how we can turn that into a sales lesson.

Paul Azinger, one of the commentators, and a Major championship winner himself, said this about Woodland and his amazing shot:

"**He focused on what he WANTED to happen, not on what he was afraid might happen.**"

I scrambled for my pen and paper, and put the broadcast on pause, and rewound it to hear it again.

So many times as salespeople we are deterred, or completely stopped (not placing the call) by the fear of what MIGHT happen.

Focus on what you WANT as you plan your week, your day, and each individual call.

Then pull the trigger. Repeatedly.

Make those calls.

And even when we get the no's--which we will--they never will be as bad as the fear of what we think they will be when we avoid them.

Let the thought of NOT even trying hard enough be much greater than any thought of a silly "no." ☎

# Thinking Big is Great. But Starting Small Gets You Going

For my entire career I have made it a priority to invest in self development.

I've invested hundreds of thousands on coaching, training, courses, books, seminars and more.

Like many people after a workshop or seminar, I am motivated. Confession: But also like many people, I tend to not follow through with all of my good intentions.

It seems like there are so many things to do, and sometimes the huge goals look so daunting, that it becomes easy to slip into the same habits that I was in prior to absorbing all of the great material, and coming up with all of these great ideas.

At one of the coaching weekend workshops I attended this year there was a big focus on what is really most important in achieving anything huge:

Starting small.

Focusing on one thing at a time.

And then the next. And the next.

You have probably heard the stories and motivational quotes ...

**Q.** How do you eat an elephant?

**A.** One bite at a time.

"*The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.*" Lao Tzu

"*You don't have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great.*"

All are so true.

You can't say "Beam me up to success, Scotty." (Original Star Trek reference there... might be lost on our younger colleagues.)

There are people in my coaching group (this is a group primarily focused on online marketing for smaller businesses) who did not have a business or even a list 18 months ago and are now bringing in over a million dollars a year.

How did they do it?

They broke it down for us.

It wasn't a get rich overnight ad, email, funnel, or sales pitch. It always started with one small action.

Followed by another.

And another.

And doing things consistently. Habitually. With tremendous discipline. Making high value activities non-negotiable.

## John Wooden's Quote

The legendary, basketball coach, John Wooden (whose national championship records will never be duplicated) was maniacal about the small things, all the way down to how players tied their shoes.

He said,

***"It's the little details that are vital. Little things make big things happen."***

While I was mindlessly scrolling through my Facebook personal feed the other day (I am working on trying to pretty much eliminate that) I saw the story of a very young couple who finally had it with their weight. They were trapped inside of their bodies. The woman weighed over 430 lbs. She is less than half that today. And their before and after photos are stunning.

How did that happen? By making a decision, and taking the first small steps. Going to the gym the first time. Having their first healthy meal at home, instead of going to get fast food.

So, back to coaching weekend. Our coach, Ryan Levesque, author of the best selling book, *ASK*, and creator of the ASK Method, stressed the importance of us focusing on just one thing at a time in the pursuit of a goal.

And here is what he has said to us a hundred times, and really emphasized it. And you can follow this advice as well.

When you are in pursuit of a major goal, ask yourself,

***"What is the ONE next step that I can take where it literally is impossible to fail?"***

Think about that for a second.

What stretch goal do you have right now that you are not actively and passionately pursuing? What is it that you would really love to achieve, but it is more like a monkey on your shoulder, than a racehorse that you are riding?

For whatever reason, it has become stalled.

Would you like to get going on it, and have it be easy to do so?

You can. And when you do, Newton's first law of motion comes into play,

"*An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion.*"

So here's what I want to leave you with, and I'll repeat myself. And I suggest you write this down, answer it, and then do it.

"***What is the one next sales/prospecting step that I can take where it literally is impossible to fail?***"

Got it? Great, now go take that small step!

☎

## From a Fellow Sales Pro

Here's something that Inner Circle member, Jay Stein emailed me.

Hey Art,

I know how you feel about stats that suggest the best time to call and yet I wanted to share with you something that I've stumbled upon.

Thought I'd share this tip with you.

On average I make 60 outbound calls a day (50 first calls, 10 to clients and to those prospects who I have place in my funnel), which means that for most of the day I'm on the phone, and make (again on average) 4 contacts per day, my point is, that anytime is really the right the time to call, yet...

I find that I make more contacts (this is purely anecdotal as I don't track the time that I place the call) with buyers who I have placed in my funnel, 10 minutes before the hour and 20 minutes after the hour and typically hear.

1. I was waiting for a conference call to come in and thought you were the call. (this makes perfect sense as most of my booked phone appts are on the hour or on the half hour)

2. I'm prepping for a (top of, or bottom of the hour,) meeting.

-Jay

———————

I like this in that it's not the typical general "study" being passed off as applicable to everyone. It's one person's experience, with comments from actual buyers.

☎

# This Prevents People From Selling More

One of the biggest roadblocks I see that prevents salespeople from getting to decision makers, and creating interest with their emails, voice mails, and openings is thinking from their OWN frame of reference and not the prospect's.

(In fact, that is a roadblock to almost all human interaction when there are conflicts, but we'll keep it to prospecting and sales.)

Think about it... every day you wake up thinking mostly about... well, you. And what you need to do. What you want. And what you don't want.

Most people let that drive their daily activity. And it shows in their calls. They need to hit their "numbers." They need so many demos or appointments.

They approach their job with a "I need to sell this" mentality instead of "WHY would someone want this?"

The words they use in their messaging defaults to the easy, canned things they have in their templates, or that do not require much thought.

They talk about the standard "benefits" that marketing came up with and are on the website.

Calls are processed instead of connections being made with individual humans.

### What TO Do

What to do instead?

Slow down. Stop even. Take a deep breath. Pretend that you are unzipping the cover that is you and what you want, and step outside of it. Then, focus on the people in your market.

You have put aside your self-interests. Now your goal is to crawl inside the mind of your prospects.

You can do this as an exercise to define and/or remind yourself of why people buy what you sell (highly recommended), and then most certainly do it before every call with your individual prospect.

Ask yourself...

❑ Who is this person? Picture their environment, what is possibly going on around them. Make it up if you don't know.

❑ What might be going on in their world that might make them a prospect for me?

❑ Why might they not be interested?

❑ As it relates to the type of results my product/service provides, what do they want the most?

❑ What problems or pains might they be experiencing that my product/service solves?

❑ How are they evaluated in their job, and how might you be able to affect that favorably?

This is an exercise I do with training clients. When you answer those questions-- first in general, and then more specifically with your research and social engineering with individual prospects--you have specific word-for-word messaging you can plug into voice mails, emails, and interest-creating openings.

I both laugh, and shake my head when salespeople look for the Easy Button... as if one magic phrase will get through, get in, and cause a prospect to say, "I've been waiting for you. Here's my Purchase Order."

No, it's a process. That's proven. That starts in your head.

Change your thinking, and your results change too. And you'll change the way people respond to you.

☎

## Offer Options to Increase the Chance of Them Picking One

In your sales presentation/recommendation, offer alternatives for the customer. Present a low, middle, and higher-priced option.

For example,

**"Paul, I have three possible solutions for you, our Mini, Midi, and Maxi models. (Explain the benefits of each, as well as the limitations of the Midi and Mini.) All will provide what you want, naturally to different degrees. What do you think is the best choice?"**

This is a great tactic because it preempts the tendency to price haggle. If they want to pay less, it is clear they will get less value. It lets them make the choice. Even if the Midi is an adequate choice, you can get a larger sale if they select the highest-price alternative. And it might surprise you how many do go this route.

## Have a Sense of Humor About Your Difficult Name

If you have a name that looks like spilled alphabet soup, you can use it to your advantage to break the ice and build rapport.

(This is one I certainly have lots of experience with!)

For example, Kym Wszolek likes to say,

**"It only looks like a giant typo,"** after spelling her name for someone.

If the moment seems right, after spelling her name, and the other person asks how it's pronounced, she'll deadpan, **"Smith,"** and then wait for the response, or begin laughing herself.

Keith Jankowski says, **"I'm the Irish guy,"** after spelling his name.

Personally, I like to say, **"It's S-O-B-C-Z-A-K. Most people agree with the S-O-B part."**

## How to Not Cheapen a Discount

If you are able to provide savings to a customer, give him a break **above** the average customer purchase amount, not below, says Tom Winninger, author of "Price Wars."

Winninger uses the example of a customer asking his office supply sales rep for a discount on copier paper. The smart sales rep said,

**"I appreciate your request and I want to give you an opportunity to save. Here's what I can do. On the first twenty-four reams we'll charge you the regular price. On the next twenty-four, agreed to as part of this arrangement, we'll give you a 40 percent savings."**

Notice the sales rep said "savings rate" instead of "discount."

Value-added salespeople should take the word "discount" out of their vocabulary and substitute the word "savings."

## The "Two Things" Technique

A reader told me he was having success with assistants and getting messages replied to using my Two Things technique. I'll share it again here.

We all know that an assistant is not going to write down a long message for their boss. So let's simplify it, and strengthen it in the process. If the assistant offers to take a message, or you can ask even if they don't offer, ask them to write down Two Things.

Make them results-oriented and brief, and something that piques curiosity.

**"Pat could you please just write down two things for the doctor. First, more new patients, and second, no increase in marketing expense."**

As our fellow sales pro shared, this increases call backs, and the likelihood the person will take the call next time, if they are available.

*Art Sobczak's*

# SMART CALLING REPORT

**Novmeber 2019** **Volume 36 Number 11**

## Using Smart Calling Intel Does NOT Make You "Creepy"

I just finished turning in the manuscript for the Third Edition of *Smart Calling*. It is scheduled to be out around May of 2020, just over 10 years after the First Edition entered the market, and changed the way sales pros prospect worldwide.

The foundation for *Smart Calling* is crafting a relevant, possible value message based on intelligence we learn about the prospect and his/her organization, and situation.

Imagine my surprise when I saw an article about not using too much inside information on a prospecting call, because you'll come off as creepy. Ironically, it was written by Charity Heller, a "content manager" at DiscoverOrg, one of the top providers of sales intelligence.

### "Intent" and "Opportunity" Data

The article suggests that you don't want to use "intent" and "opportunity" data, such as saying things like,

"I see you're looking into …"

"I know you're working on …"

"I've heard that you have a new project …"

She suggests that the typical replies to things like this are defense and denial, such as

*"How did you know that?"*

*"No, we're not."*

*"Where did you get this information?"*

*"WHATEVER IT IS, I'M NOT INTERESTED!"*

Then she takes a big leap and compares that to getting a personal call from a stranger, saying,

*"I know where you live, your cat's name … and what you're doing right now. Eating a sandwich, huh? Is that turkey? You're not a mustard guy?"*

She says that a negative response is natural when a stranger reveals that they know personal information.

### Consider the Source

Well, I'll give her a bit of a pass on this, since she is a "content manager," and not a decision maker who is getting many, many untargeted sales pitches per week, by phone and email.

And I'm assuming she is not placing prospecting calls, with success on hundreds of calls per week relying on creating interest within about 10 seconds.

The fact is, calling business decision makers, at their place of business, is much different than calling a person at home or on their personal cell, and talking about personal things. (We **do** want to find out personal info about our prospects, since people buy from people, but we won't be leading with that of course.)

And actually, the opposite of what she said is true: The more a sales rep knows about the business, and can craft a relevant possible value message around that information, the greater the chance the prospect will pay attention.

I base my opinion on years of working with salespeople actually doing it, doing it myself, and receiving both bad, and the occasional great call.

To the author's credit, she does provide some useable. ideas. These are from DiscoverOrg's VP of Sales, Steve Bryerton who suggests beating around the bush a bit. He says you can use the "intent" data as a prompt, but not to make it the reason for the call itself.

### Examples

**"I've been seeing X trend in your industry. Are you seeing that, too?"**

**"Many companies in your industry start thinking about X when they get to be your size. Is your company thinking about that, as well?"**

**"I talk to dozens of people a day who struggle with X, and I have some great ideas for solving it. If you've struggled with this issue too, maybe I can help."**

**"Your peers say X is an issue. What do you think?"**

Although these are passable, and I get the reasoning behind them, my feeling is that it forces the listener to connect the dots and do more thinking. I don't want my chances of success in those first important, precious seconds of a phone call to rely on someone figuring out a riddle.

It's like the difference between,

*"A major concern with CIO's in the financial industry is compliance and cardholder security. If that is a concern of yours, we have ideas to help,"* and,

**"In speaking with your VP of Operations, I understand that you are concerned about the data breaches you just experienced and are looking for a compliant solution. We specialize in working with credit union CIO's to address that and I'd like to ask a few questions to see if it would be worthwhile to have a conversation."**

***(Continued on next page)***

*(Continued from cover page)*

I don't want a prospect to have to paint a picture in their mind to understand how I might be able to help. I want to show them the picture, with them in it, and get them to react emotionally to it.

And let me go back and address the "defense and denial" responses that the author suggested are typical responses. In all my years of teaching this, I personally have not heard anything like that.

Actually though, I have said those things to sales reps who call with something that I would never be a prospect for. Then I respond with, "Where did you get my name? Why are you calling ME?"

But I have many times suggested a simple technique to sales reps in training who might feel a bit squeamish about using intel, for fear of coming across as creepy. If they ever are questioned about how or why they have that "inside" information, simply respond definitively with,

"Well, I respect your time and would not want to waste it unless I did my research, and felt strongly that we have something that is a good fit. And to help determine that for sure, I'd like to ask a few questions…"

Don't worry about being creepy on Smart Calls. If you want to worry about anything, be paranoid about not being relevant enough about how your results might be able to help them specifically.

**SMART CALLING REPORT**
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:


# Sales Observations

**Seems like more and more we** hear how buyers are more educated, and they are (pick a percentage) through the sales process by the time they speak with you. I'm always skeptical of any sales stats, but let's assume there is some truth to that. So then, when a prospect does contact us, let's find out exactly why they did so.

I've been teaching this simple concept forever, but I rarely experience as both a business and personal buyer.

Ask questions to get them to sell themselves, and give you great information in the process.

For example,

**"Tell me, what was it that prompted your call?"**

**"What was it on the site that caught your eye and persuaded you to contact us?"**

**"How did you happen to decide to call us?"**

**"What were you looking for on our site?"**

I've made a lot of money with these simple questions, letting people buy. You can too.

**Everything you do or say adds** to or detracts from your image. Think about that for a moment. For now, let's analyze your voice mail greeting. Listen to your tone. Is it inviting? Here's an important point: do you have negative words in there? For example, "sorry," and "unfortunately." As in,

"I'm sorry I missed your call..."

"Unfortunately I am away from the phone right now..." (And, no kidding, right?)

Keep it upbeat and positive!

**"I look forward to speaking with you!"**

**"Thank you for calling!"**

**This has happened several times,** and in each case it made an impact. In response to my call, one of my vendors left an after-hours voice mail. He said he was on the road and picked up my message late, and would call back the next day, which he did. Nice touch. Sure, it seems small on the surface, but it's the little things done consistently that build and keep relationships.

**I got up to my hotel room on** the 16th floor after a long day of traveling. The key card did not work. Great. So I trudge back down to the lobby. The solo front-desk attendant was on the phone handling a reservation, while another line was ringing. She put that one on hold. I'm standing there right in front of her. She gets off the first call, handles the second. She's oblivious to me. Another line rings. She gets rid of the second call, and handles the third. All I need is a new key. Finally someone comes out of the back room and helps me.

My point?

The phone takes precedence over the people ***right in front of you.*** That's part of the reason why the phone is still such a powerful communication and sales tool. People are still answering their phones. They are taking meetings. They are buying. From those who can communicate value. Keep placing those calls!

Go and make this your best month ever!

Art

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# This "Soft Skill," and Caring, Will Set You Apart

In an interview with a senior HR director at a large firm, he lamented that although he had plenty of jobs to fill, his main issue was with the general lack of "soft skills" by applicants.

These include using proper English, common courtesies: "please" and "thank you," having their pants pulled up (I'm not making this up) and listening and following instructions.

I have a major problem with people not caring enough to do a great job. I especially have a problem with the "not listening" part.

It's tougher to listen over the phone than face to face, but the problem is all around us. It's a pet peeve of mine.

Since I'm traveling frequently I have more encounters with service and hospitality people than the norm. I have some great experiences with people who really care and excel at what they do, regardless of their position and pay level. Unfortunately though, it seems that more and more people—like the HR director said, just don't care enough about the details.

## Examples

A few examples...

· I'll emphasize sauce on the side for wings. They often come with the sauce on.

· I'll ask for a vodka soda with a lemon. It usually comes with a lime.

· The grocery clerk asking, *"Did you find everything you were looking for?"* and then not listening to the answer, resulting in them asking again a few seconds later.

Oh, I know, there are some people right now reading this who are fuming, coming to the defense of service people, saying it's not their fault, they are paid low wages, lots of customers are jerks, that I am out of touch and just can't put myself in their place.

Save it.

Yes it IS their fault. And I have been there... I've washed dishes, bussed tables, cleaned office toilets, delivered flowers, mowed lawns... I didn't love to do those things, but I CHOSE to do those things at that time in my life.

Although I always didn't immensely enjoy all of those jobs, I worked hard at them and dealt with the occasional idiot. Ultimately I realized I could trade my time and talents, deliver the most value, and make the most money—plus sit inside and not get dirty--by talking to people and selling. (That didn't insulate me from the small minority of jerks. We still must deal with them).

And I decided to do whatever it took to become excellent at it. The more I learned and practiced, and the harder I worked, the more I got paid. Funny how that happens.

If someone chooses a job, they have contracted and agreed to provide the stated value for what the employer is paying.

## Do Everything with Excellence

I remember a quote from Brian Tracy when I was just starting in business over 30 years ago (I'm paraphrasing a bit):

***"When you are doing anything, why not do it to 100% of your ability, and with excellence?"***

Everyone has that choice every day. And we all do make a choice at different levels on the scale.

For us in sales, let's circle back to the listening part. This is the easiest to master from a purely physical perspective, but perhaps the most difficult to execute for many. The problem isn't with knowing how to listen. Everyone knows how. It's the ***why.***

When I cover listening in my training workshops, I go through the Two P's of listening: purpose and pause.

The purpose is having a reason for listening. And for those who right now are saying, "Yeah, but I can't even get through to people to have a chance for them to listen to me," the reason why, and the problem usually also is purpose. The salesperson has "Me-itis," making his messaging about him and not about the prospect. Of course people don't want to talk to him.

Instead, when you have an other-focused purpose, your attitude, approach, messaging and desire to listen takes on a different tone. As do your results.

The pause is simply that.

Silence.

Pause at two points in the question asking and answering process. Pause after you ask a question. Pause after they answer. You might be amazed at what you can learn.

## Slow Down Your Listening

Also, a hindrance to good listening and comprehension is tuning out and being distracted.

Since people speak at about 120-140 words per minute, and we can listen at a rate up to 10 times that, we often quit listening because we assume we know what the other person will say. That is dangerous. Practice slowing down your listening, focusing on every word and thought from the speaker. It will help you pay closer attention and gain better comprehension.

So, there's my contribution to soft skills training that can and does produce hard results, and cash. ☎

# Hate Prospecting? Try the Menendez Method Instead

Felix hates prospecting calls.

In fact, he despises them. He won't make them. And yet he is one of the top sales reps in his company. Felix Mendendez will only make warm calls and he closes over FIFTY percent of those he makes!

His secret?

Referrals.

Felix gets referrals from his existing clients whenever and wherever he can. This month we will look at the "Mendendez Method" of referral selling. It's a good one, so pay heed.

### Why the Big Deal?

Why the big deal about referrals? Because in business-to-business selling, referrals will close at 40%, 50%…heck, even at a 100%. This is not hyperbole. This is a fact. Referrals close faster and easier than any other single approach in the selling world.

Of course, it makes sense, doesn't it? When a customer supplies you with a referral, your job is made easier for two reasons. First, when you call the referral you have the common ground of the person who gave you the name. It is not a cold call. You have a pretext for calling and typically, the referral listens closely to what you have to say. That's half the battle.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, there is the *explicit* or *implied* endorsement of you, your company and your product/service by the person who made the referral. This endorsement creates an element of trust almost immediately. The referral, if he or she desires, can 'check' up on you.

### Why Sales Pros Avoid Referral Selling

But the fact of the matter remains that many, if not most, sales reps avoid this veritable gold mine of leads. There are two reasons for this:

**1.They fear it is too pushy or aggressive.** Unfortunately, many reps think customers won't like them if they ask for a referral.

Bull.

If the sales rep has done a good job in selling the product and the client has derived positive benefits from it, the rep has "deposited" a degree of trust and satisfaction in their relationship. This is powerful equity. Use that equity. Leverage it. Use the goodwill that has been created.

Too pushy?

Hey, get over it. What's the worst that could happen? The worst thing that could happen is that the client doesn't cough up a name. So what?

**2. They don't know.** This is different. Some reps don't ask for the sale simply because they don't know how to go about it. Let's take a look at how Felix tackles referrals.

## The Mendendez Method: How to Ask for a Referral

Over the last few months I have listened in on Felix several times and have observed that he uses a simple two-step approach.

### 1. The Request

The first step is the request. After Felix has taken care of any business issues and has ensured that the client is completely satisfied with the program, he'll say,

**"Dr. Maynard, I've got my manager on my back about getting sales in…you know how they are…and I was wondering if you had a name or two of any doctors who could benefit from the program like you have?"**

Then he shuts up and waits.

Felix's approach is candid. Nothing fancy. It is straight and to the point. He explains exactly what he is asking for and why. His approach is also clever. He references the "benefits" of the program and uses that to remind his client that the request isn't just beneficial to him (Felix) but to others. In other words, it is a win, win situation. Clients like that.

### 2. The Reward

The second step is the "reward." After Felix has been given a referral or two he says,

**"Thanks Dr. Maynard. I really appreciate that. Hey, listen, if I convert any of these I'll be sure to send you an cap or golf shirt. Which would you prefer?"**

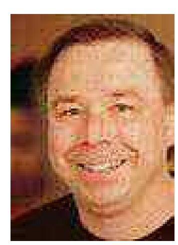
Interestingly, the reward is held back until a name is given. In other words, he doesn't use it as a "bribe" up front to solicit a referral. That's cheesy. He uses the "reward" afterwards to say "Thank you." That's classy.

### Summary

There is nothing particularly complex about Felix's approach to referral selling. He has created an effective technique but more importantly, he USES it. And that's why he's one of the top sales reps in his company. Not once in all the times I have monitored his calls has Felix NOT gotten a referral. Not once. So what does that tell you?

If you are not using referral selling you really need to give your head a shake!

Good Selling.



*(Jim Domanski is President of the Telemanagement Consulting Group, a telemarketing consulting and training firm. Contact him at 613-591-1998)*

# How to Use Comedy Improv Skills in Your Sales

*By Julie Hansen*

I'm a big Tina Fey fan and her book *Bossypants* didn't disappoint. Not only is it a fun, insightful glimpse behind the SNL cameras, it also shines a light on one of the cardinal rules of improv that has a lot of application for anyone in sales.

Improv for salespeople can be a secret weapon when it comes to overcoming objections and moving the sale forward.

### Improv for Salespeople: Always say "Yes and."

The essence of the Rule of "Yes and" is that no matter what your partner (prospect) gives you, you say "yes" to them.

**Example:**

Tina: Hey Julie, that's a cute monkey you have there.

Me: Yes, he is cute, isn't he? (Even though I don't see a monkey.)

In other words, I accept it. Do I have to agree with it? No. I don't even have to LIKE it. But I am acknowledging my partner's perception of reality.

In sales, your scene partner is your prospect or customer, and they have their own view of reality as well. If your prospect sees a monkey (aka, has a different opinion) arguing with the "facts" head on is rarely a winning tactic. (Now, if your prospect sees ACTUAL monkeys, you have a bigger problem on your hands!)

Denying another's reality is called "Blocking" in improv and usually only serves to bring the scene to a screeching halt.

### Example of Blocking in Improv:

Tina: Hey Julie That's a cute monkey you have there.

Me: That's not a monkey. That's a dog!

What happens?

Scene OVER, that's what happens!

I have just said "NO" to my scene partner, made them look and feel foolish and left us with nowhere to go. Unfortunately, this happens all the time in sales. We say "No" to our customer's reality (subtly and not so subtly) which puts them on the defensive and we meet resistance.

### Blocking in Sales:

Prospect: "I always buy Brand X."

Salesperson: "But you're not getting all of the key features that we offer which will really help you accomplish your goals…"

What happened? The salesperson has immediately put his prospect in the position of defending his competitor. That's not where you want them to be, is it?

By the way, be aware that "but" is simply another form of no. Have you ever had someone apologize to you and then blow the whole thing by adding "but?" For example: "I'm really sorry I knocked you over, BUT you are only allowed 15 items in the express lane."

My friend Tina (That's MY version of reality – deal with it!) says that this rule "….reminds you to "respect what your partner has created" and to at least start from an open-minded place. Start with a Yes and see where that takes you."

So now that you've said "Yes," to your partner, what happens? You add "And":

In other words, bring something new to the party. As an improviser or a seller, you have to add something, an idea, an opinion or a solution in order to keep the scene (or sale, in this case) moving forward.

### "Yes and" Improv Example:

Tina: "Do you like my new car?"

Me: "Yes, that's a great-looking Ferrari, AND it would be fun to take on a road trip to Vegas this weekend!"

Now we have a scene—and a hot new car–that can go any number of places!

### "Yes and" Sales Example:

Prospect: "I always buy Brand X."

Salesperson: "Yes, and that made perfect sense in the past since you didn't have all the great choices you have today. How about if I show you some of the latest features that I know are most important to you…"

With "Yes And," I am acknowledging my prospect's reality and offering up an alternative perspective — without getting their defenses up.

Improv for salespeople can be a valuable tool to have in your pocket. Try following the Rule of "Yes and," to avoid many of the toe-to-toe stand offs that can break down a sales conversation and move towards collaborating with customers on mutually beneficial solutions. After all, isn't that what sales is all about?!

I think Tina would say, "Yes, and…"

*(Julie Hansen is a recognized expert on gaining a winning edge in sales by applying the power of acting and the performing arts to sales presentations and demonstrations. She is the author of the highly acclaimed ACT Like a Sales Pro! How to Command the Business Stage and Dramatically Increase Sales. www.PerformanceSalesTraining.com)*

# A Call Opening Before and After Makeover

Here's a call opening that was submitted by a reader. I've given the Before, and the After, and below I'll give my breakdown of what I did.

**BEFORE**

Hello________________. Thank you for taking my call. My name is Ashley Langston and I am a wireless consultant for CDG Wireless here in Columbus. I was speaking with_____________and they have indicated that you use 2 way radios, count inventory manually and have wireless internet. I have partnered with companies like yours to help reduce labor cost associated with inventory counts by up to 90% using various RFID technologies. In addition I provide numerous wireless resources like barcoding, voice over IP and two-way radios. I'd like to ask you a few questions or schedule a meeting with you to see if I can achieve the same results for your company.

**AFTER ART'S MAKEOVER**

Hello________________. ~~Thank you for taking my call.~~ ~~My name is~~ I'm Ashley Langston ~~and I am a wireless consultant for~~ with CDG Wireless here in Columbus. I was speaking with_____________and they have indicated that you use 2 way radios, count inventory manually and have wireless internet. I have partnered with companies like yours to help reduce labor cost associated with inventory counts by up to 90% ~~using various RFID technologies.~~ (The "how" is not important yet.) ~~In addition I provide numerous wireless resources like barcoding, voice over IP and two way radios.~~ (These are all things you SELL that they could object to.) I'd like to ask you a few questions ~~or schedule a meeting with you~~ to see if I could provide you some information. ~~can achieve the same results for your company~~.

**Art's Review**

Ashley has a pretty good foundation here, and with a few modifications we can make it even stronger.

✓ First, I took out the thank you for taking the call. That really adds nothing, and takes up valuable time.

✓ She did some social engineering and found out some useful things about their use of radios and manual inventory counting (not the most efficient methods) and wireless presently and mentioned that, which is good.

✓ She then mentioned what she has done with other companies to address that issue, and gave a number. Also good! I suggested taking out the RFID part, since the "how" part is not as important as the result itself right now.

✓ Then she went on to list the other "things" that she sells. People can hear those and object to them in their mind, thinking, "I don't need that."

✓ She ended by mentioning she'd like to ask a few questions, which is great. But then added on the mention of scheduling a meeting. We do not want to ask for a meeting in the opening. Yes, it might eventually be the result of the call, but mentioning it now can cause resistance.

✓I suggested taking out "to see if we can achieve the same results for your company." Again, granted, that will be the intended results, but it is assuming too much too soon. We simply want to get into a conversation at this point, while minimizing the chance for resistance.

You can see how changing just a few words can have a dramatic affect on a call opening. ☎

# How to Change the Topic Smoothly

I was talking to a prospect and I was discussing the possible deliverables for their training, based on her answers to my questions. Then it hit me that I wanted to present something I hadn't asked about yet. So I said, **"I'm going to shift gears here a bit. I hadn't asked you about this. Tell me about how you are now handling ..."**

It was a nice transition from what we had been discussing without feeling like I was jumping all over the place.

In thinking about the best communicators--and salespeople-- that I know, they all are smooth. Their conversations do not seem disjointed.

And that got me thinking about changing the subject when we need to on calls.

### When You Might Want to Change the Subject Smoothly

It could be when they get off on a tangent.

Or, like in my case, we want to shift to a different area of focus that they could benefit from.

Maybe you've reached an awkward silence in the conversation.

So I searched for conversational ways to do that.

I found some great ideas from an accent and communication coach for non-native English speakers who simply goes by "Kim" on her website. (Which I found odd for someone who is a communication expert. Anyway...)

### Changing the Subject by Introducing a New Topic

When you have a talkative prospect, and maybe the conversation has veered off the rails a bit, you can redirect it. Kim suggests first agreeing with what the other person just said.

- That's interesting.

- Yeah, I heard about that too.

- That seems really popular around here.

- People keep asking me that question.

Then after using one of those types of statements, you follow with,

- So…

- Speaking of which…

- Talking about…

- By the way…

- Anyway…

- That reminds me…

- Oh, before I forget…

- I wanted to mention…

- Let's talk about…

- We need to discuss…

- Oh, I wanted to tell you…

- Funny you should mention that…

### Completely Changing the Topic

In other cases, when you want to change the topic entirely, consider,

- Completely changing the subject…

- This has nothing to do with what we were talking about, but…

- Not to change the subject, but… (and then go ahead and change the subject).

- Changing gears a little bit…

- Changing the topic slightly…

- Totally unrelated…

When you are comfortable shifting the dialogue, you can accomplish more of your objectives, and do it in a natural, conversational way. ☎

# An Opening Review of a Call to a Customer

Here's an opening I received from a Smart Calling training customer. They sell compliance and regulatory resources. This is a call to an existing customer in an attempt to cross sell other resources.

"*Good morning/afternoon_______, this is ______calling from___. How are you doing today? I am giving you a call today to discuss your DOT compliance program you have with us. Are you still the one who handles DOT for your company?*"

" *Great, then I'm talking to the right person. And as I'm sure you're aware, there has been a lot of activity with the DOT this year. So to help me get a better understanding of your company and your DOT program, I have a few questions I'd like to ask you so we make sure we have the right resources in place for you. First let me ask you….*"

### Art's Review

First, this could be an internal issue, but I'd want to know who handles DOT and not have to ask this person, if indeed they are the decision maker. We can do this through social engineering. Or, if we are calling the name on the account, leave the asking about it out.

Also, this does a lot of talking before even getting close to giving them a possible benefit or a reason to even stay on the phone. It talks about what the caller wants "to get a better understanding," and to "ask a few questions," before finally at the very end saying "make sure we have the right resources in place for you." And even that isn't a strong benefit. What does that mean for the listener?

A briefer, stronger example would be:

**"Hi, I'm ____ with ___. You presently have a DOT compliance program with us, and because there has been a lot of activity with DOT this year, we want to be sure that you are up to date on any changes that affect you… I'd like to ask just a few questions ..."**

☎

### Handling "We're happy with what we're doing."

During some training we worked on responding to "We've been with our supplier for years and we're happy with what we're doing."

Here are some responses you can use or adapt.

**"I understand. Would you at least be open to seeing how others have benefited?"**

**"There have been lots of other doctors who also have been happy with what they have been using. And many of those were surprised to learn _____. I'd just like to ask a few questions to see if I could provide you with some information..."**

**"I understand that you want to stick with what you've been doing. But how about we take a quick look at everything that you really want..."**

**"Under what circumstances have you considered looking elsewhere during that time? What would cause you to look elsewhere?"**

**"I imagine you have upgraded technology and methods in other areas over the years... can you share what you've done?"**

**"That's good. But, what would you need that would make you absolutely delighted with your process?"**

**"Doctor, I'd imagine you keep up on the latest technology in most areas of your practice... would you be open to at least taking a look at what your peers are doing now to ____?"**

**"That's fine Mr. Client. As you know, there are new products and services that come along every day that are bigger, better, faster and cheaper etc. which is what often separates the succussful companies from the unsuccessful ones. In the event that something changes with your current service/supplier would it be alright if I stay in touch? Terrific...by the way...is there any particular product or service that you might have an interest in?"**

### Question From a Fellow Sales Pro

**Q.** "Art, Thanks for all your great teachings! Question on following-up: I sell my LinkedIn website writing and resume writing for over $1,000, for which I require prepayment. Have you covered what happens when the prospect commits, you invoice, they promise to send payment and then don't? These projects are not small endeavors on my end... they take concentrated, focused time and scheduling. Sometimes I've put a due date on it, prospect misses and emails back... oh, is it too late? Usually those emails come in within 24-78 hours. Thanks!" Tia Dobi

**A.** Tia, without knowing all of the details or hearing the calls, in general the problem is they really haven't committed in their mind, or else they would do it, right? So what can you do to fix that? Perhaps they don't see enough urgency to do it now. To prevent that, help them tell you why it is important they do it NOW, what they will miss out on every day. Also, have you asked for payment right there over the phone? Finally, ask specific commitment questions, "**When will you pay this so we can get started?**" "**Will you get this paid by tomorrow morning?**" And as you mentioned, tell them you are giving them a specific time slot for this work and payment needs to be made to get started or they lose that slot. Hope that helps!

### Refer to the Assistant

It's always good to befriend the executive assistant when trying to reach the buyer. A fellow sales rep in the training business shared a tip that works well for him. He refers to the assistant when leaving a voice mail message for the boss. For example, **"Ms. Bigg, Julie suggested I leave this message for you. She told me a few things about your situation and how you're now handling the fulfillment of your continuing professional education requirements, and we might have a few options to make that process a little easier for you ...".**

Art Sobczak's

# SMART CALLING REPORT

December 2019 Volume 36 Number 12

## This Experiment Showed What C-Level Execs Respond To. We Show You How to Use It

Getting in to speak with executives at the highest levels of companies of course requires a lot more than jumping on the phone and winging it.

The training company, Corporate Visions, conducted an interesting experiment on getting access to C-level buyers. They did an entire article about it. (https://corporatevisions.com/executive-level-selling/)

While their article goes deep into the weeds, and uses scientific terminology, I'll summarize what they did, the results, and then show you how you can use the winning methodology.

### The Experiment

Corporate Visions partnered with Dr. Nick Lee, Professor of Marketing at Warwick Business School, to test common messaging approaches to use to get access to an executive and secure time on their calendar.

They got 400 C-level executives with VP or higher titles in companies larger than $50 million, across multiple industries, who had authority over budget and purchasing decisions to participate in an actual simulation.

The executives were told they were reading an email from an outside vendor sales rep they didn't know and had never met with before.

They were then randomly divided among four test messaging conditions. After reading the message, they answered a series of questions, including whether they would take a meeting, decline, or delegate.

### Four Test Messages

They tested four common approaches. I am quoting them here directly from their article

**1. Unique Product Value Proposition:** This approach uses a proven model for creating and delivering a differentiated product value proposition that shows how the seller's solution helps solve a problem in a new, different, or better way than competitive alternatives.

**2.Known Business Initiative + ROI:** This is a popular approach that's been widely promoted for the last 20 years across a variety of sales processes and skills training programs. It's where the seller demonstrates they've done their homework and understands the priorities or challenges that the executive is trying to address. Then, they share quantified ROI results from other similar customers and offers an estimated potential impact on the executive's business.

**3.Provocative Industry Insight:** This approach introduces a new need the executive hasn't considered up to this point, based on the seller's experience with other customers. This "Unconsidered Need" may be a problem or missed opportunity the executive doesn't know they have or doesn't fully appreciate. This is an approach we've tested and proven to work in other sales conversations but had not yet tested specifically as an approach to gaining executive access.

**4.Competitive Benchmark Offer:** This approach has generated a lot of buzz recently. The seller offers to benchmark information comparing the prospective executive's company to other similar companies. Ideally, it includes exclusive data your company developed with existing customers in relevant industries. This data offers executives a chance to see how they stack up across a range of key performance indicators.

Can you guess which one performed the worst?

It was Number 2, The "Known Business Initiative + ROI."

Personally, I found that a bit surprising. But their reasoning made sense.

### Explained in Layman's Terms

I'll put it in layman's terms and simplify it with an example: if you tell an executive that you know they are looking to break into a new market segment and can show them how to do that with a 15% ROI, well, that is probably something they've already studied and came up with their own possible plan of attack for.

You really haven't told them anything new, or given them a reason to shift from what they already are thinking about.

Putting that into an opening, voice mail, or email might pique some curiosity, but it isn't as compelling as the winner in the test.

Which was, Number 3, **Provocative Industry Insight.**

*(Continued on page 5)*

# Sales Observations

**As we enter the New Year, it's** normal for many people to embark on resolutions, goals, intentions, etc.

And, it's a fact that most of these will go by the wayside by the end of January. Sound familiar?

One of the main reasons is that people go about it in a way where they set themselves up to fail. They seek out to DO something different, without first BEING the person who will consistently commit to doing what is necessary.

Transformational coach, Jim Fortin calls this the Be-Do-Have model.

Let's focus on sales and new business as an example. If someone says they intend to prospect more in 2020, they might have good intentions initially, and begin on that path. But, life inevitably gets in the way.

They go back to being the person they have always identified with. The person who did not prospect regularly.

On the other hand, if a sales pro shifts their thinking and entire being to "I AM a sales pro who prospects one hour per day, non-negotiable," then the activity—the DOING—comes as a result.

**SMART CALLING REPORT**
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/ Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:


The key is that it becomes part of your identity. It is who you are.

To simplify it, we will never accomplish anything we do not already see ourselves accomplishing.

What's very interesting is that the subconcious mind can't distinguish between what is real, and what is imagined.

And our subsconcious actually controls our behavior.

So, you CAN tell yourself that you are the the person who prospects every day. But you must do it repeatedly.

I have just barely scratched the surface here with this principle. I encourage you to check out Jim's work: JimFortin.com. I encourage you to also download his free "Master Thought Forumula" there.

He also has an awesome podcast (there are a couple past episodes on this). Personally, I have been in his coaching program the past couple of years and it truly is life-changing, without the rah-rah and fluff that so many motivational speakers regurgitate.

**More on BEing the person** who is a top performer: If you spend—waste, actually— time on social media that is not business-related, do you think that is the behavior of the highest performers in your field?

Likely not.

The problems with frittering away time on Facebook and Instagram are well-documented. In addition to the time-suck, the content itself... the toxicity, negativity, political arguing, and self-comparing... all affect people both consciously and subconsciously.

And not in a positive way.

How about instead having some go-to educational, motivational and inspirational sites and podcasts you make a habit of visiting and consuming.

I can think of no other profession where our results--and income-- relies more on our attitude, and how we feel when we are performing our job.

So how about making this the year where you get obsessed with your self-development? The fact that you are reading this says that you are already ahead of about 95% of the population.

How about getting into the top 99 percent? You CAN do it!

**Speaking of inspirational material,** I found an amazing Ted Talk from the greatest college basketball coach of all time, John Wooden (Google it and listen several times). He gave this 18-minute talk when he was 91, in his wheelchair, and shared an incredible amount of wisdom.

Directly related to what I just mentioned about comparing yourself to others, he said, "Never try to be better than someone else. Always learn from others, and never cease trying to be the best you can be." Further, he added, "If you get too engrossed and involved and concerned in regard to things over which you have no control, it will adversely affect the things over which you have control."

Go and make 2020 your best year ever!

Art

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# Avoid All of the Mistakes in This Opening

Here's a call opening I received that carries a ton of lessons on what not to do:

*"Hello, this is _____ with Action Promotion. I was cleaning out some old files here from a sales rep who didn't do a very good job, and I see you had some interest at one time a couple of years ago in advertising with us, and I'd like to talk with you about that again."*

I know there are skilled, professional sales reps out there selling advertising—but they're not the ones I get calls from. I hear from people who give that business a bad name.

Let's look at what is wrong with this opening:

**1.** *"I was cleaning out some old files here . . ."* Wow! Doesn't that make one feel special! Consider the same approach, different situation: *"Hello, Brittany, it's Tad Johnson. Hey, I was just cleaning out my contacts on my iPhone and I saw we texted each other a couple of years ago ..."*

**2.** *" . . . from a sales rep who didn't do a very good job . . ."* Nice way to build credibility in the first 10 seconds of a phone call, huh? So, before I hear a results-oriented reason why I should spend any time with this guy, he's hinting at the inefficiency of his personnel department and sales management.

**3.** *" . . . and I see you had some interest at one time a couple of years ago in advertising with us . . ."* This statement only serves to put someone on the defensive. Even if I had expressed interest at one time (which I had not; this company comes no where close to reaching my market), it was over two years ago! For example, think about all the telephone solicitations and emals you've received during the past three months but didn't buy from. How many of those can you remember the precise details of? Now, can you even recall *any* of the calls you received over **two years** ago?

**4.** *" . . .and I'd like to talk with you about that again."* Am I missing something here? Where's the benefit . . . the results?

This next point is true for everyone, but many advertising sales reps seem to be the worst culprits: prospects do not buy advertising (or any product or service itself). They might even have negative impressions of advertising in general. When they invest in advertising they do so with the hope of the end results: increased store traffic, more phone calls, more leads, or more sales.

### Recommendation

OK, smart guy, you might be thinking, what approach *should* he have taken? Easy. Treat it like any other prospecting call:

❑ **In his preparation** he should realize that it's probably a good idea to not even mention any past conversations until he's well into the call with the prospect. After all, if the old sales rep was as bad as he says, what kind of impression did that leave on the prospects he contacted, even if they remember?

❑ **He should collect information** before speaking with the prospect. What my company does might have been a logical place to start. He could have quickly realized we weren't a prospect. (No, on second thought, it wouldn't have mattered to this guy. Even after I told him my buyers are not Data Processing Managers and Directors, he still tried to pitch me on the number of people I could reach, and the "low" investment per contact.)

❑ **The opening** has got to hint at results the person would be interested in, and then get him involved. Let's assume he did indeed target my market, and learned a little about me before speaking with me. A good opening would be, **"I'm ____ with Action Advertising. We specialize in helping marketers get their message out to sales leaders who buy sales training materials for their companies. I see that's an an audience you promote to, and we might have a few alternatives to help you acquire customers at a relatively low investment per account."** ☎

# What Superstar Sales Reps Never Say

Benjamin Franklin said, "He who is good at making excuses is seldom good for anything else." Let's look at excuses for not getting a sale which are never heard from superstar salespeople, according to consultant John Graham.

• *"They didn't get back to me."* Or, *"They are getting back to me."* Expecting someone else to take the action, stops the action. Never wait long for someone to take the next step.

• *"I didn't have time."* The same as *"I was too busy."* If it is important, make the time. Otherwise you'll wear the label of "Can't handle the job."

• *"We've been playing telephone tag."* Call more often, set a phone appointment, give them your home number or cellular number, insist that you're paged during lunch . . . do whatever it takes to be sure you're accessible, and that you reach them.

• *"I haven't been able to get through to her."* Why not? Are people ignoring your voice mails? Are screeners casting you aside? Perhaps your message is not compelling enough. You've got to provide them with a reason to want to speak with you. Stand out from the crowd. Get creative. Send flowers, gizmos, whatever it takes to get attention.

The only measure for success in sales is performance. "Excuse Makers" are a dime a dozen. "Roadblock Removers" are the sales superstars. ☎

## Consider the Source When Hearing No

An online travel article discussed secrets of getting what you want from hotels and airlines. It made a valuable point not just for travelers, but for salespeople as well: Don't accept a "no" from someone not qualified to give you a "yes." ☎

# Six Objections Mistakes, and What TO Do Instead

Many sales reps have been taught to "overcome" objections, and other nonsense that is actually counterproductive, and causes prospects to become more defensive. Here are six of the common mistakes I see, and we'll then look at the preferred, "consultative" response to objections.

### 1. Putting Words Into the Prospect's Mouth

**Prospect:** "I need versatility."

**Mistake:** *"You know you need to have flexibility to move your funds from one account to another."*

**Consultative Sales Rep: *"Could you explain to me what you mean by versatility?'***

The logic here is simple but powerful. Your version of "versatility" (moving funds from one account to another) and the client's version of the word may be miles apart. The consultative rep listens for words which may have a broad interpretation and attempts to bring focus to the objection.

### 2. Insulting the Prospect

**Prospect: "I find your prices are very high."**

**Mistake:** *"If I understand you, you are not interested in quality, is that correct?"*

**Consultative Sales Rep: *"I understand Price is critical in any decision. In order to make sure that we are comparing 'apples to apples' can you tell me what you are comparing our price to?"***

It is truly sad. Countless sales are lost to price every day simply because many sales reps make false assumptions that belittle the client. A consultative sales rep, through questioning, seeks to learn exactly what the prospect is evaluating and then educates him/her. For example, your price may include a warranty where the competitor's might not.

### 3. Avoiding the Issue

**Prospect:** "Quite frankly, your service is useless."

**Mistake:** *"What are you looking for in service?"*

**Consultative Sales Rep: *"I understand. Obviously something has happened to make you feel that way. Can you tell me about it?"***

Instead of being defensive or asking what the client is looking for in terms of service, the consultative sales rep recognizes that this objection will not be answered until the prospect has the opportunity to "purge" himself. In addition, finding out the cause of the dissatisfaction gives the sales rep an opportunity to correct the problem or future problems. The questioning does not necessarily ensure a sale will be made but it does begin to position the rep and the company as responsive.

### 4. Demand to Demand

**Prospect:** "The return on investment is too low."

**Mistake:** *"What kind of return on investment are you looking for?"*

**Consultative Sales Rep: *"Rate of return is very important. What are you comparing us to in saying that the rate is too low?"***

This response is similar to #2. Consultative reps acknowledge the customer's objection and then seek to narrow the scope. As it stands, this objection is vague and can not possibly be answered effectively without some comparative basis.

### 5. Shifting Responsibility

**Prospect:** "Your delivery standards are too slow."

**Mistake:** *'I wish there was something I could do but my hands are tied when it comes to shipping, Five days is the best I can do."*

**Consultative Sales Rep: *"I can see that delivery is critical to you. What has made you feel that our standards are too slow . . . ?"***

The consultative sales rep does not blame others. He/she seeks understanding so that solutions can be developed. Sometimes that takes guts. Asking "why" the product needs to be delivered in X days requires an element of courage. But it is the type of question that gets the customer thinking. For example, you might hear,

"We've always had delivery in three days."

Is this a standard of habit or of necessity? If it is a standard of habit, perhaps you can offer some value-added service that the extra two days might bring (for example, a lower price because expedited shipping is not required).

### 6. Contradicting the Prospect

**Prospect:** "You guys always seem to be on strike or experiencing work delays."

**Mistake:** *"No, that's not correct. Did you know we have not had a work stoppage in 18 months?"*

**Consultative Sales Rep: *"Yes, in the past we have had work delays, and over the past 18 months management and union have worked together to solve this issue. Can you tell me if you have experienced any delays so that I can investigate further?"***

In this situation, the sales rep acknowledges the prospect's perception of a problem and then seeks to explain and investigate. By using the word "and" instead of "but" to explain management and union efforts, the consultative sales rep does not demean the prospect's evaluation. Further, the consultative rep seeks to determine if something has occurred recently to prompt this remark. Ultimately, it gets the customer to focus on the reality of the present rather the events of the past.

Practice with your own objections. Use these ideas and approach objections from a problem-solving, consultative perspective.

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*(continued from cover page)*

The researchers suggest that to get someone really interested enough to take a meeting, you need to "destabilize a preference." (Which Number 2 does **not** do).

This is done by "offering new information that they don't know. Offering that new information either changes how they define the problem or changes the range of options they have available to solve it."

Number 3, when using the Corporate Visions "Why Now Story Model" helps to accomplish this.

### The Why Now Story Model

Here is that model as they describe it:

**1.** Present a business issue rooted in external trends and factors the executive will identify with and connect back to their strategic initiatives;

**2.** Introduce Some Unconsidered Needs—that is, unforeseen problems, challenges or missed opportunities your prospect has underappreciated or doesn't yet know about that create flaws or limitations in his or her current approach;

**3.** Provide a solution story, demonstrating specifically how you can resolve the Unconsidered Needs you identified and enable them to realize their goals;

**4.** Quantify business impact by sharing a preliminary calculation of how your solution can positively influence revenues, cost savings, and operating margin.

They do not give an example of how to use this with actual messaging. But I have taken the liberty to do so.

Here is an opening that would use that model.

A little background as to how I used the model: the hypothetical sales rep here did some research to learn about the company's expansion plans. In this case, it would have been pretty easy to find online through news sources.

**"Hi Ms. Prospect, I'm Dale Seller with Compliance Automation. I understand that your team had California as one of the possible states for expansion, but the new independent contractor law could delay or eliminate those plans. There actually is a unique, little-known way to still have service providers considered completely independent there. In fact, we've successfully implemented it for a client in a US county with a major city that enacted a similar law, and they've avoided $4 million in expenses this year. I'd like to ask a few questions to see if it would make sense to have a conversation."**

Even if you are not selling to the C-suite, this is a sound approach in generating interest. Use your Smart Calling intel, and this approach (which is essentially a form of the Smart Calling model) and you'll enhance your chances of entering into a meaningful conversation. ☎

### Not "I." Use "You" Instead

Record your calls and have a few transcribed. (The mobile app, Temi, is great and inexpensive for the transcription.) Then go through and circle every use of "I." Think of how you could have instead used "you" and "your." For example, instead of, "I think our product is the best for that application," you could say,

**"When you use your new system for that application, you'll notice how much easier the job becomes, and how much more quickly you finish."**

☎

### A "Saturday Night Live" Questioning Technique

There's a classic Saturday Night Live routine where David Spade plays the annoying reception person, and communicates primarily through fill-in-the-blank questions. **"And your name is . . .?" "And your purpose for being here is . . .?"** When used at the right time, in moderation, this is an effective technique. For example, you might say, **"So, your main goal for this project would be . . .?"**

☎

# A Few Great Questions

I've got a bit of an obsession with sales books. Always have. Amazon has compounded that with their suggestive selling. As a result, I have about 20 new sales books stacked up that I need to get to.

With that said, I also enjoy going to my shelves containing the hundreds of sales books I've collected over the years. What's great is that basic human psychology has not changed. What was written years ago usually is still very relevant today.

Here's an example. I pulled off my shelf and skimmed through ***"The I HATE Selling Book,"*** by Allan S. Boress. I saw some awesome questions.

Here's a question to learn the decision-making process and time frames:

**"What does the decision-making process look like for hiring our firm?"**

If you are being considered along with at least two of your other competitors, ask this question:

**"Based on what you know so far, and if my company wasn't involved in the process, between the other two firms, which would you recommend?"**

This usually whittles their choices down to you and the remaining vendor. You could get even more information by asking,

**"What was it about** (the company they wouldn't select) **that would cause you to eliminate them?"**

### A Question to Ask Yourself

The best questions are the ones we ask ourselves. How about this one:

**"What would need to happen for me to increase my income by 50% in 2020?"**

Begin a list with your answers. You'll find they are very attainable.

☎

## Prospecting Ideas for Appointment-Selling

I was doing research for a client training program and going through my material I've written over the years. Early in my business I became friends with another trainer who also focused on prospecting. While he never became a big "name," Bill Bishop's material was solid. And it's just as applicable today. Here's some of Bill's advice on "selling the appointment":

**"Is there any reason why** we can't get together around 8:40 this Wednesday morning?"

**"Is there any reason why** your partner/attorney/Aunt Flabby can't join us?"

**"Would it be a problem** for us to meet around 9:20 Tuesday?"

**"Do you have any objection** to a 10 minute meeting so you can see our _____?"

The key words in closing these appointments are in **bold print.** Master the key words, and follow them with the words that are appropriate to your situation. Of course, if you aren't setting appointments, you could use these same key words to close the sale by phone.

## Stalls Are For Horses

Here are more ideas from Bill Bishop, from on stalls and objections.

After hearing something like, "I want to discuss it," or "Give me a call back," you respond with:

**1. "I understand. That usually means there is a money-related question, or some other question I haven't answered yet. What is the question?"**

**2. "I understand. I'm sure you're leaning in one direction right now. Which way are you leaning?"**

**3."I understand. Let's talk about the worst thing that could happen if you went with it. The worst that could happen is that ________."**

You then fill in the blank with something like,

**"....you'd try us out and find we are the same as what you're getting now, and that wouldn't even be so bad."** ☎

## Dumb Questions Create Objections

As I've said quite often, there *are* such things as dumb questions.

For example, during a prospecting call, or in the early stages of a follow-up call, you don't want to ask questions that invite an easy objection from them, such as,

*"So I guess you're satisfied with your present vendor?"*

Or, *"I'd imagine that you don't want to go through the trouble to evaluate a new supplier?"*

As goofy as these might seem, I've heard them.

If someone is resisting as a matter of instinct—which most people are wont to do—let them think of their own reason to justify it, and then allow them to verbalize it.

What occasionally happens is that by actually applying some rational thought to their resistance, then stating it out loud, they might realize it's not logical, and might become more open-minded to your suggestion. ☎

## Get Agreement on What They Mean

A critical part of listening is ensuring you understand what the speaker said. If you are a bit cloudy, try saying,

**"Let me see if I understand what you're saying . . ."**

**"So if I'm following you, you're saying that . . ."**

**"What I'm hearing is that you . . . "**

**"It appears that what you want is . . ."**

When you're more certain, paraphrase with,

**"As you see it . . ."**

**"It seems to you that . . ."**

**"What you feel, then, is . . ."**

☎

## Stay Sharp at All Times

With the repetition of phone work naturally comes the temptation to become lax with some of the basics, especially when you're quite busy. Here are two areas to especially be cautious with.

➥ **Leaving rushed voice mail messages.** Particularly your phone number. If your goal to have them return your call, a rushed phone number that's unintelligible negates that possibility. And most of us are unaware we're doing it. Here's a good strategy: According to Nancy Tuckerman and Nancy Dunman, authors of the Amy Vanderbilt Complete Book of Etiquette, before you leave your phone number, say, **"Here's my number,"** and then pause for one or two seconds. It gives them a chance to retrieve a pen. Then pause every few digits, and repeat the number at the end so the person can check what he has written.

➥ **Blurting out your name, and your company name.** I've heard introductions that sounded like the speaker's mouth was taped shut. Articulate your introduction, and speak at a rate so you're understood. Be proud of your name and affiliation!

And remember, even though you might be repeating something 30 or more times daily, they're hearing you for the first time. ☎

## Get Referrals from Within Their Company

If you have a customer within a company that has multiple locations, or many departments at one location, you probably haven't even scratched the surface of potential business. The hard part is beyond you—getting the company as a customer. Now that you're in the door, part of the family, ferret out other opportunities. Ask your customer, "Who else within your company also uses/does ______, who could also take advantage of something similar to what we're doing together?" Prompt them a bit: **"How about other departments? Other locations?"**

Even if they come up empty, ask them, **"If I can find other buyers on my own, it wouldn't be a problem if I mention your name as a reference, would it?"** ☎

### Your Call IS Important

Keep this in mind: if you and your company didn't deliver value to customers, you wouldn't be in business.

Especially remember this as you're planning and placing calls. Too often reps will have the feeling that they're calling busy people and they don't want to interrupt the prospect . . . or what they're calling about is insignificant.

Nonsense! Get that out of your head! As long as you're able to clearly and concisely articulate your potential value to a valid recipient, you're not wasting their time. Their job relies on evaluating and implementing new ideas, products, and services.

### Motivational Ideas

Here are self-improvement and motivational ideas from Art Mortell, in his book, **"World Class Selling."**

❑ **Use "Forced Scheduling"** to push yourself into success patterns. Set before-hours telephone appointments, or brainstorming sales-idea breakfast sessions with others to build successful habits.

❑ **Exaggerate.** Take what you typically avoid, and get outrageous with the activity. If you avoid prospecting, hold a marathon prospecting day, doing nothing but cold calling. Comparatively, the one or two hours you should prospect regularly will seem like child's play.

❑ **Emulate.** Look at the people who are achieving at the levels you aspire to. Study their positive characteristics and emulate them. Don't try to *become* them.

### Characteristics of the Best Conversationalists

Visualize right now some of the best conversationalists you know . . . the people who make you feel most at ease, those you really enjoy speaking with. They probably have several of these characteristics: 1. they listen with feeling; 2. they show a sincere interest in what you have to say; 3. they ask you questions; 4. they get you talking about one of your favorite subjects: you. These are the characteristics essential to building rapport and successful selling by phone. Analyze yourself in each of the areas, and work to ensure you excel at them. ☎

## How You React to Your Mistakes Determines Your Destiny

We all flub up occasionally. How you deal with it is what charts your success or demise.

The great, late, college football coach, Bear Bryant, said about mistakes, "You should do three things with them. Admit them. Learn from them. Make sure they never happen again."

Dr. Martin Groder said, "You won't learn anything from a mistake if you refuse to admit your error in judgement to yourself."

You'll just commit the same mistake over and over again. Like using an opening that elicits more resistance than interest, or using a worn-out closing technique that only serves to "close" the door.

Groder offers further advice we can relate to objections:

"When someone tells you you're wrong, resist the urge to defend yourself or deny that a problem exists. Assume your critic is right until he/she is proven wrong."

Except, with objections we don't want to *prove* them wrong, we use questions to help them come to a better conclusion. ☎

## You're Not a "Talking Email"

Keep in mind you are not a "talking email." That's a caller who spews the same information, call after call, with little regard for questioning and the needs of the listener. For example, the caller might repeatedly say, *"The reason for the call is to let you know about our special on muffler belts this month. They come in six colors and are only $5.95 each. Would you like some?"* A tape recording could give that same message, for gosh sakes! Ensure you're calling with prepared questions, and only present after you've learned of their needs.

By the way, you *can* take a specific offer, and make that the premise of your call—you just don't give the entire spiel at the beginning. Instead, you might start with,

**"Pat, when I saw this month's special, I thought of you, and how it would be perfect for you because of what you told me last time about how muffler-related items move well in your store.** *(pause)* **Tell me, what brand of muffler belts are you carrying now?"**

After layering questions further—questions designed to uncover needs-related information—then the listener would be in a much more receptive frame of mind to hear about the belts, plus the rep could tailor his presentation to fit snugly with the prospect's situation. ☎

❑ **Regardless of how many** calls you placed or received today, your next one is the first one to that person. Treat it like the only one for the day.

❑ **When you greet** someone on an incoming call, view it as escorting a friend into your home. You wouldn't frown or act indifferently. Greet them warmly, with enthusiasm.

❑ **Practice tongue twisters** to articulate clearly. Recite this one now, several times while picking up speed each time: "Frank phoned four pharmaceutical factories feeling fresh and fulfilled." ☎

## Closing Ideas for Your Script

Here are ideas to use when preparing and delivering your recommendation and closing script.

✔ When prefacing your close, in addition to "recommendation," consider,

**"I suggest . . ."**

**"If I were in your situation, here's what I would do . . ."**

**"My advice is to . . ."**

✔ After prefacing, make it easy for them to take the action:

**"Here's all we need to do to get started . . ."**

**"And it will be very simple to begin the implementation process . . ."**

✔ Don't rush through your close, or change your tone of voice. If they detect you're uncomfortable, they might have second thoughts.

## Try These Trial Closes

After you've presented a few benefits, and nothing but silence greets you at the other end, resist the tendency to continue with the presentation. What you are saying may not be of interest to the listener. Find out what they think and feel about what you've said:

**"Am I going in the right direction?"**

**"Am I talking about what you're interested in?"**

**"Are any of these things resonating with you?"**

**"Am I on the right track here?"**

**"Are we on the same page here?"**

## They Don't Always Need a Problem

When prospects tell us, "I'm not having any problems with my current supplier," our first thought typically is to ask questions to get them to admit, or realize problems they might be having. R. Scott Winters, suggests an alternative method. Respond with,

**"I'm glad to hear you're not having problems . . . but are problems the only criteria you use when making the decision to change suppliers?"**

Generally, the answer will be no. Then you have the perfect opportunity to question further along that path, learning more about the other criteria, and then following up with your appropriate product/service recommendations.

## Help Them See a Problem

Even though the previous point presents an alternative, asking about problems is still an effective way to open up their mind. However, don't simply say, *"Are you having any problems now?"* That forces them to think too much for you, and they're likely not going to do that, or at least come up with anything worthwhile. Instead, in response to "I'm happy with my present supplier," ask something like,

**"I see. When you've had difficulty in the past with ______, what were the specific problems?"**

You fill in the blank with something you're pretty sure they have challenges with. For example,

**"When you've had difficulty in the past with compatibility, what were the specific problems?"**

## Find the Real Reason for Objecting

Get to heart of the reason for an objection: **"It seems the real decision here is this: is** (the ultimate benefit they'll receive) **more important than** (the objection)**?"** For example, **"It seems the real decision here is this: is giving your salespeople a proven system for generating additional add-on sales more important than the time they'd be investing in the half-day program, time off of the phone?"**