



TELEPHONE PROSPECTING AND SELLING REPORT

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A Simple Technique For Building Rapport By Phone

Maybe you've heard this before:

"Build rapport with your prospects on your calls."

Yeah, good idea in theory, but how do you build rapport?

And what is rapport, anyway?

Simply defined, it's when communicating with someone is easy. There's trust, enjoyment, likeability, and identification with the other person.

It's amazing how we can sometimes reach that level almost instantly with a stranger on the phone, while with others, maybe people we've known for years, it's like talking to the wall.

In researching rapport, most commonly you'll find, like I did, information on NLP, Neuro-Linguistic Programming. This science of communication provides good instruction, much of which focuses on observing the communication style of the other person and adapting your style accordingly. Mirroring and matching tone of voice, rate of speech, body language, words, etc.

A Powerful Rapport Technique

I'm sharing one other powerful technique that you might use now to help build rapport, but perhaps don't even realize you use it. It probably also has been used on you.

This is something that I've rarely thought about consciously, but have done as long as I've been in sales.

It's not anything that I've written about in this form.

In fact, I needed to do additional research (which I found fascinating) to come up with this article.

It's "cold reading."

Essentially, it's making a statement about the listener that is on-target in their mind. As a result, depending on the listener and the setting, he or she usually reacts positively—in some cases they are amazed at your insight—and instantly changes and or strengthens their perception of you.

Psychics, magicians, even police interrogators use it to give the impression they know more about the listener than they actually do in order to get what they want, whether it be the listeners' belief that the "reader" actually has supernatural powers, or a confession, in the law officer's case.

For us, a very subtle form of cold reading is used to build rapport, which includes elements of trust and likeability.

I don't want to put you to sleep here, but this has scientific grounding. It's The Forer effect (also called personal validation fallacy or the Barnum effect named for P. T. Barnum). It is the observation that individuals will give high accuracy ratings to descriptions of their personality that supposedly are tailored specifically for them, but are in fact vague and general enough to apply to a wide range of people. The Forer effect can provide a partial explanation for the widespread acceptance of some pseudosciences, such as astrology, graphology and fortune telling.

How To Use It

Let's simplify this a bit and make it practical. We all have self-images. Positive characteristics we're proud of. Things we identify ourselves by... gourmet cook, loyal friend, hard worker, expert at Sudoku, pretty eyes, funny, always on time, etc. When someone notices and reaffirms this self-image by complimenting us or just mentioning it, what happens? Of course, we feel good about it, and consequently, we feel good about them as well.

Thus, rapport.

So, how do we use it in sales to build rapport?

I'll give you an example of how it was used with me. Whether this guy did it intentionally or not, I don't know. I was looking at (and ultimately purchased) a very high-end piece of exercise equipment for a home gym. There's a backorder waiting period of over two months from the manufacturer for new ones, so I tried ebay and found a couple of units for sale. In corresponding directly with one seller he said he had one he was selling because his fitness club was going out of business. In our conversation, after asking a few questions about me and why I wanted the machine, he made this comment:

"I bet you're a tall, in-shape, skinny guy."

"Well, yeah, I'm tall, in pretty good shape, but need to drop about 10 pounds to be at my ideal weight."

At that moment, I softened up towards this guy. I liked him more. And I was about to enter into a five-figure negotiation with him. I felt good about his comment, because that's how I saw myself. The funny part is that I knew exactly what had happened, and I still felt good!

Dr. Robert Cialdini, author of the classic book that every salesperson should own, *"Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion,"* states that likeability is one of the six "Weapons of Influence." Related to what we're discussing, giving compliments is almost guaranteed to enhance your likeability. What's fascinating is that in Cialdini's research, people who think that a compliment might be false produced as much liking for the flatterer

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Sales Observations

In the 1999 movie, Office Space, unmotivated employee Peter Gibbons says to consultants that he comes in late, spaces out for about an hour, takes lunch, and then spaces out for another hour. "I'd say in a given week I probably only do about 15 hours of real actual work." There are lots of people like that, according to a survey by Salary.com and AOL. They found that the average US worker fritters away 1.86 hours per **day**, not including breaks and lunch. Do you engage in any of their time wasting activities? They are socializing, internet surfing, spacing out while staring at the computer screen, arriving late, and of course, personal phone calls.

You can always make more money, but you can't make more time. How are you investing yours?

Woody Allen is often credited with saying, "80% of success is just showing up." Shelly Pittelko didn't show up for work in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin (went on vacation) and forgot to throw her \$1 in the office Powerball lottery pool. Of course, the 100 or so co-workers who did will split a share of the \$208.6 million paid for their winning ticket, about \$500,000-\$700,000 per person.

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Some people say that success in prospecting is just showing up. Well, it's true that if you show up (call) at least you have a chance. But, be sure you're placing **quality** calls. Then you don't have to rely on your luck in the lottery to get wealthy.

A huge overnight storm dropped three inches of much-needed rain here in Omaha yesterday. I went downstairs for an early-morning workout, and my last step from the stairs to the lower level hit the carpet with stomach-sickening "squish." My sump pump had failed, leaving much of the carpet soaked throughout the lower level. While spending most of the morning moving furniture and soaking up water to prevent further damage, I was also on the phone with a variety of insurance agents, adjusters, and disaster-restoration contractors. In the middle of all this, I get a phone call from some charity, starting out with, "We're not looking for a donation..." I cut her off and said, "Look, I'm ankle deep in water and waiting for a phone call. It's a horrible time." Amazingly, she pretty much ignored that statement and continued, "I understand. What we're doing is..."

I just hung up.

I'm not a big believer in asking for someone's time on a business call. It's really up to you. I can argue either way. But, if the other person flat out tells you it's not a good time, don't go the objection rebuttal sheet with some goofy response! That should go without saying, but obviously it's not always practiced.

As I write this, my carpet is being dried by seven industrial-sized fans, and I have a dehumidifier the size of a small refrigerator sucking moisture out of my house. When all of this happened yesterday, I immediately applied attitudes and actions that I also use when things don't go well, or worse, disastrously, in sales or any aspect of life.

1. "What will I do about it?" I instantly figured I needed to stop further

water from coming in, so I located a spare pump, and hooked it up. Too many people whine about what happens to them instead of doing something about it.

2. "What did I learn from this?" Regardless of how horribly you or I botch a call, or lose a sale we were counting on, and despite how badly we feel about it, we can always learn something from any situation. That's the difference between a pessimist and an optimist. Between someone who is rejected and the person who feels that at least he accomplished something. Me? I learned I need to regularly check my sump pump; get a battery backup because one guy I met at Home Depot said his power went out and his fully-functional pump didn't work; and, add the rider to my insurance that covers stuff like this (I didn't have it, and I've had a discussion with my agent as to why not).

3. "Will I be able to laugh at this?" Although when we're in the midst of a disaster or setback, it's mood-dampening for sure, we almost always can laugh at it at some point. For me it was just a few hours after the discovery, talking to a good friend, laughing about how I could have a water disaster in the desert (I have, actually—air conditioner leaking into the condo below). This was at least the fourth time I've had water in the lower level of this house (water heater, air conditioner dehumidifier...the list goes on). Many people in sales take themselves way too seriously. Lighten up. Learn from each call. Laugh at yourself. It keeps your attitude at a high level, and other things in perspective.

A survey of 200 business purchasers by Raintoday.com found that 74% of them would be "much more likely" to buy from a salesperson if the seller would simply **listen** to the prospect. I'm still amazed

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when listening to calls how much salespeople like to hear themselves talk. Shut up, and let them buy. They tell you what they want if you ask them.

What I'm Reading Right Now.

Like lots of sales reps, I'm a fan of brief pointers and tips I can use right now. *"Secrets of Great Rainmakers: The Keys to Success and Wealth,"* by Jeffrey Fox is that kind of book. Fox gives 44 short, 2-3 page chapters focusing on one idea each. The chapter titles are intriguing ("Relationships Are Bunk," "Don't Mail Proposals," "The Real Secret About Asking For The Order), as is the content.

For example, in the chapter, "Take the Word Price Out of Your Vocabulary," 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?"

By the way, on a similar note, I also strongly recommend another of Jeffrey Fox's books, *"The Dollarization Discipline: How Smart Companies Create Customer Value...and Profit from It."* By far one of the best books ever written on selling value, not price.

Go and have your best month ever!



Art

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Hear It Again For The First Time

By Jim Meisenheimer

Why is it that when many sales reps hear "training," they become resistant and negative?

I attribute it to a lack of "sales self-esteem." Not enough sales reps view themselves as professionals in the same light as professional athletes, actors, lawyers, and doctors. If our perception is one of professionalism, like with the others, why shouldn't the continuing education, practice, and commitment to excellence be the same?

Don't be like the sales reps who are turned off by the familiar aspects and material of sales training, even if you have seen them before. Regardless of how much training you've had, I'd venture to say you are not using everything you know or have heard.

Reminds me of what Bill Gove, the legendary first president of the National Speakers Association told me when he was coaching me on presentation skills:

"Hear it again for the first time." Do the same as it relates to your sales skills.

Every professional sports team has preseason training camps to work on, you guessed it, the fundamentals. Everyone attends and participates. From the lowly rookies hoping to make the teams, to the veteran superstars, the very best at what they do in the world earning tens of millions per year, they drill on the basics. What is basic is often essential.

Doc Severenson, the famed bandleader for Johnny Carson said that he practiced the scales for two hours every day. Boring, right? Not for a professional. It's standard operating procedure. Professionals prepare and practice.

To those at the top of this sales game, it offers pride, substantial income and opportunity, and incredible security. And if you believe in the concept of professionalism, do you also believe in the things that you should

be hearing again for the first time? Things like ensuring you create interest every time with your opening, questioning, asking for commitments, working on your phone communication skills, and listening?

If so, great. If not, begin hearing it all again for the first time.

Jim Meisenheimer's sales techniques and selling skills focus on practical ideas that get immediate results. You can discover all his secrets by contacting him at (800) 266-1268 or e-mail: jim@meisenheimer.com Use this link www.meisenheimer.com to sign-up for Jim's FREE Selling Tips Newsletter and to get your copy of his Special Report titled, "The 12 Dumbest Things Salespeople Do."

How to Get the Competition's Customers To Call You

Some sales reps, after concluding they won't get the sale, bail out with the meaningless phrase, "Keep us in mind, OK?" Here's a way they don't have to commit your name to memory. If, despite your best attempts, they don't buy, but yet you feel they are a good prospect and they haven't completely closed the door on you for the future, say to them,

"Stan, even though we won't be working together in the short-term, we have at least established we could be a good alternate source for you in case your primary vendor can't deliver. I'd like to send you my card, and here's what I suggest you do. Put it in the file of your current vendor, or staple it to their catalog. This way, when you're ordering from them and can't get something, you won't have to waste time trying to find who to call."

It's a common sense idea that could just result in business for you.



How To Advance The Sale

There are only four outcomes to any sales situation: a sale, no sale, a continuance and an advance.

The first two outcomes are easy to comprehend. But the line between continuance and advance is the line between mediocre reps and immensely successful reps. If you're interested in reducing the sales cycle, working on better qualified leads and generating more sales, pay attention.

Continuance

Unfortunately, the vast majority of reps are superb at "continuing" a sale. A continuance is where it *appears* that the sale cycle is being closed but in reality, it is only being *extended*. This is sometimes a tough concept for reps to understand. Here are some examples to illustrate what I mean:

- I'll send you some product brochures in the mail.
- I will give you a call sometime next week to discuss the proposal.
- Give the sample a try and we'll review it latter on.
- I'll fax you the material and we'll go over it.
- Let's meet sometime next month and we'll assess your need then.

On the surface, these statements would suggest that the sale is moving forward. Not so. Did you notice the two common denominators?

1. There is no firm commitment on behalf of the prospect or customer to take specific action.
2. There is no firm follow-up date.

Some sales will, of course, occur. But if you are interested in getting more sales in less time, and if you would like to disqualify those clients who are not actually interested in your product or service, then you must learn to "advance" the sale.

The Advance

The advance differs from a continuance in that it gets the client to take a *specific action within a given timeframe*.

Here's how the above examples would look/sound like with an advance:

- I'll send you a product brochure on Nite-White in the mail and what I would like to recommend is that we review these together next Thursday. How does 10:15 look to you?
- I'll give you a call next week to discuss the MEA proposal. Suppose we schedule Wednesday at 2:20?
- I'll be glad to provide you with an Atrium sample. Specifically when will you use it? What is the criteria for evaluation? What I would like to recommend is that we set up an appointment for Friday, at 8:30 a.m. to review your evaluation. How does that sound?
- I'll fax over the material right now. Can you review them so that we go over documents together in about 45 minutes?
- Let's set up an appointment for next month, say the 15th, at 2:45. At that time we can reassess your situation. Is that date okay with you?

Do you see the difference?

Each example suggests a specific action that must or should be taken by the client. This creates active participation from the client which moves the sale further through the cycle. Next, each example has a specific time frame for the accomplishment of the action which creates commitment. This is a powerful one-two sales punch.

Withdrawing the Advance

If the client will NOT commit to any action or follow up, it suggests that perhaps their interest is not particularly strong at this point in time.

If the client will NOT commit to the action, then withdraw the advance. For example,

"Ms. Finn, I get the impression that perhaps now is not the best time to send the literature. If it is not possible to set up a review

date, perhaps it would be best if we waited and I call you at a later date."

It takes guts to do this but what it really does is allow you to focus only on genuine sales opportunities. You don't waste time "watering dead plants."

This is an extremely powerful technique. Use it and advance the sale!

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How To Make Your Voice Mail Message Stand Out From the Clutter

Want to enhance your chances of a voice mail message being remembered, maybe even evoking a return call?

- Back it up with a written message by an assistant. Ask the screener, assistant, or anyone in the area to scratch out a brief note for the prospect. For example, **"Pat Walters left a voice mail regarding cutting maintenance expenses by 25% and will call back tomorrow."**
- Ask them to NOT put it on your prospect's desk, but on his/her chair. That sets you apart.
- Further, ask them to draw a little smiley face next to the message. Don't laugh. Corny to be sure, but memorable, right?
- Reinforce it with an email, if you have or can get the address.

Of course all of this must complement a great value proposition. The message must be about them and their world, and what they want or wish to avoid. What we're doing with that message is making it stand out from the clutter.



Building Rapport With Voice Patterns

(To add more to this month's cover story on rapport, here's a tip received from a reader.)

I always start my conversations with the same format. **"Hi, this is Bruce Adams with Alaco Ladder Company. May I speak with _____, please."**

According to a friend who works with NASA, the short message performs two important functions. First, it sets the ear's internal "volume control."

And secondly, that little bit of patter allows the person on the other end to pull up the correct speech conversion matrix for me. Now, according to my friend, the secretary listening to me knows how loud my voice is and she can interpret each word without difficulty. In the future—and this is where we are headed—the process becomes easier and easier. Now after six times saying the same thing, the secretary gets into the rhythm of my voice and pitch and timbre ... and a lot of technical stuff that I do not understand.

Now when I call, she recognizes my voice, calls me by name and asks, "Do you want (prospect's name)?"

Small Talk

So far so good. Now about the prospect. The same approach applies here. I keep five 30 second "chats" at hand. They are weather, sports, business conditions, mutual friends, and what are you doing. Now, do I really care about the weather? Well, I really do, but what I really want is to have the prospect become familiar with my voice and speech patterns. Now after six conversations, he can recognize my voice without having to wonder "Who is this?" And I have built a good relationship.

To summarize, I call, the secretary answers. She recognizes my voice. Zing, I'm through to the prospect. He answers and bingo, he knows who I am and what company I work with.

This process works! It is not the type of approach that works in 30 seconds. It takes time. But it really pays off. Now, when my competitor from City Ladder calls, the prospect does not take the call because the secretary does not transfer

it to him. And the reason is she now knows me and does not need to deal with another ladder salesman's voice pattern.

Incidentally, the five categories I picked are non-controversial. What's not to like about the stock market going up? I got burned badly some years ago talking about the church I attended. Blew that sale.

Take Advantage Of This Simple Source Of Additional Sales

I often see sales reps missing opportunities for easy revenue, when they believe that they are actually doing well with a customer. It's becoming satisfied with what your good, existing customers buy, and not asking questions about other items or services and subsequently offering them.

The reason could be that sales reps get comfortable with the business they get from a customer. The customer places regular orders, doesn't require much maintenance, and it's easy, regular business. And, some sales reps have told me they don't want to screw up what they have now, so they don't try to build on it by suggesting more.

Big mistake.

Certainly these customers buy other things that you sell, but obtain them elsewhere. And THAT could jeopardize your existing business, since perhaps those vendors might be more aggressive in going after more of their business. So beat them to it.

On every call, make a list of products/services you know your customer is probably getting elsewhere.

List out the advantages you have over competitors in those areas.

For each product/service, prepare questions you'll ask to determine what they buy, what their requirements are, and where they buy now.



Unconventional Tips On Getting Through To Decision Makers

Use A Calling Card

Here's a suggestion from Patrick Killam with Killam Publishing on getting to decision makers.

I was reading a column in your newsletter about ways to get through to your party when they notice your number from caller ID and are avoiding your call. A great way that I work around this is that I buy a calling card (can be picked up at any local store). When you go through a calling card there are many different ways it can appear on someone's caller ID. It can say "Unknown Caller." It could be a number from out of state that goes through another phone network, etc. But, bottom line, I've had much success with this system. I think it would be easier than most of the others offered in your newsletter: It's quick, easy and you can do it from the convenience of your office at a minimal expense (\$.03 a minute).

Send Them The Phone, Then Call It

At a marketing seminar I attended, one of the participants shared how he has gotten the attention of high level decision makers. I had heard most of the gimmick-related techniques of sending odd objects to decision makers, but this one beats them all.

He purchases cheap, \$20 disposable cell phones (you can get them at WalMart). He then sends them to his highly-targeted top level decision makers along with a note that says, "I believe we can help you increase your profits. I will call you 3:00 p.m. on Thursday the 16th. Please listen for my call."

Then he calls the cell number!

The approach is so unique it works almost every time.



Stealing Accounts From The Competition

By Joe Catal

Most sales reps run into situations where the prospect is already buying from a competitor. Here are some ideas on how to win that business.

Uncover the Pain Instead of Asking Them What They Like

When they say they are working with your competitor, don't ask them if they're happy with their current supplier. Instead, you need to apply a little pain. Here's what I mean. When I sold on-hold message systems, they were on a compact disc. I knew that many of my competitors put them on cassettes. Cassettes wear out and break, CD's don't. So when I was told they already had a program, I would say **"Is that on cassette?"**

Knowing 75% of the time the answer would be yes, I then got them thinking about the pain:

"How many times a year do you have to replace those tapes from wearing out and breaking?"

They'd say 2-3 times a year. I replied,

"Have you ever considered putting your program on a compact disc that never wears out or breaks, and comes with a lifetime warranty?"

Most told me they hadn't, and asked how much it would be to do that. That's **exactly** what I wanted them to say. As you can see, this will get them thinking of a problem that I can solve. Every product or service has a weakness. If you can figure out how to exploit it, and you have the solution, you'll steal accounts.

Learn When Their Contract Expires

If someone is locked into a contract, ask them when it expires and how you go about putting in a bid. Send in your bid early. Ask who their current supplier is. Obtain their existing

vendor's brochures, catalogs, or go to their web site and see what you're up against. Find a weakness that you can exploit and go for it. Of course if you're into volume dialing like me, this would be a lot of work, and may not be realistic.

Learn Why They're Changing

Sometimes a prospect will tell you they're looking to change vendors. Before babbling on about how great your company is, you have to find out why they want to change. What would they like to have that they're not getting now? I actually say,

"So I don't make the same mistake as your other vendor, what is about them that you're not happy with?"

This really opens the door for you. Maybe they're always late on deliveries. Find out how often they need deliveries. Maybe they can't keep them supplied on a regular basis. Find out how much of a supply they need. Make sure you know why they're looking to change vendors so you don't make the same mistake.

Ask for 1%

Here's a phrase you may be able to work into your arsenal. Sometimes people are hesitant to do business with you. Maybe you're out of state, or they're not familiar with your company. Just tell them all you want is 1% of their trust/business, and an opportunity to earn the other 99%.

(Joe Catal is at

JoeCatal@hotmail.com. His book "Telesales Tips from the Trenches: Secrets of a Street-Smart Salesman" is available in hard copy, or as an e-book for \$29.95. Or order, call 800-326-7721, or go to www.BusinessByPhone.com)



Should Cell Phones Be "Sell Phones"

One question that has provoked some discussion is, "When is it appropriate to prospect someone on their cell phone?"

My answer to that is, the **only** time I would consider calling a prospect or customer on his cell phone is if he specifically asked me to. Of course, that would require some prior communication. And would pretty much exclude calling a cell on a prospecting call.

Even though more and more people have gotten rid of their home phone lines and replaced them with their cells, and many keep their cell with them at all times, even at the office, I don't feel it is appropriate to use that as a means to reach someone unless you have permission.

Someway, somehow, still unbeknownst to me, a investment broker-type got hold of my cell number, which I rarely give out. I answered, didn't recognize the caller ID, but fully expected to hear a familiar voice. He acted as if he knew me, using chessey, "How 'ya doin' old buddy" words and tone. As soon as I realized it was a salesperson, my attitude turned to one of mild anger and I grilled him as to how he got my number. It went downhill from there, with him eventually hanging up on me.

Here are a few other related points.

- o When prospecting, never try to get someone's cell phone number on your own. Reps have proudly told me they've asked assistants and secretaries for decision maker cell numbers, not actually stating that they know the person, but giving that impression. Not wise. Just think of the reaction you'd get from the person when you call.

- o If on the prospect's voice mail she mentions "...or you can call me on my cell phone ..." I'd still suggest getting permission before you use it. If you don't know them, they shouldn't have to pay for the call so that you can market to them.

- o If an assistant volunteers, "You can reach him on his cell phone," be absolutely certain that it's OK to call it. **"Is that the way she prefers to take her calls? You're sure that's OK?"**

I treat this the same way as having someone paged. Common sense should prevail here.



What To Do Next When They Have Not Kept Their Promise

Sales reps every day miss sales opportunities when they participate in a scenario at the beginning of a follow-up call like the one I observed recently:

Prospect: "I have your information right here but I haven't taken a look at it yet."

Caller: "Oh, OK, I'll give you a call back in a few days."

STOP! What's wrong here? Let's analyze the prospect's words, and see what kind of clue we see:

Prospect: "I have your information right here but I haven't taken a look at it yet."

This is your opportunity to say,

"Ok, well as long as you have it there, why don't you grab it, and let's go through it together."

This works beautifully for several reasons. First, you're not allowing your literature to stand alone to do your job: the selling. That's what happens when literature is sent with the instruction, "Take a look at it and I'll give you a call to see what you think."

On the other hand, when you request that you examine it together, you're walking them through the finer points, areas you know they have interest in.

Gets Them Physically Involved

Also, you get them physically involved. When your telephone partner does something in response to your request, he/she has moved from the passive state of simply talking on the phone, to proactively engaging their senses of sight and touch.

And, you save time by using this technique. If you meekly say you'll call back, what are the chances you'll reach them the very next time you phone? One in three, maybe? How much time do you spend on pre-call planning, and writing or typing notes

each time you don't reach a person? Five minutes at the least? This time adds up. Time that is gone forever. Time that could be invested in more productive opportunities. Time that doesn't need to be lost if you seize the chance when it arises.

Here are steps to keep in mind as you prepare your follow-up call so you're ready in case they "haven't read the literature."

Four Steps

1. Your preparation for the follow-up call actually takes place as you end your initial prospecting call. You need to be convinced that they indeed **are** a good prospect according to your criteria, and that they do have interest in what you're offering. Be stingy with your time and literature. Don't be of the mindset that the more literature you flood the marketplace with, the better. This results in disappointment. There's nothing wrong with saying,

"Pat, if I'm reading this conversation correctly, it seems that if you like what you see when I send the specifications, we have a great chance of working together. Is that right?"

2. Before your follow-up call, be certain you review your notes so you have their "primary hot button" in mind. If you can't pinpoint a hot button, your first call wasn't strong enough. You shouldn't elect to place a follow-up call unless you know the person is interested in some aspect of your offer.

3. Have in front of you a copy of the material you sent. Be prepared to direct them to a page, a paragraph, or whatever is appropriate to get them talking.

4. Don't be discouraged if you do indeed need to give them a call back, IF you have at least tried to engage them during this conversation.

Even if they haven't looked at your literature, take advantage of the situation and get them involved!

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as when the praise was true!

I do not suggest you make insincere statements to try and get what you want. I do suggest you study, understand, and use this powerful psychological tool. Here are some specifics on how I suggest you use it in everyday sales situations.

1. Listen carefully to cues regarding the person's self-image and accomplishments.

2. Reaffirm that self-image and compliment them on their accomplishments.

For example, sales managers often make a point of telling me how well they are doing this year, how much sales are up over last year, how they have reduced turnover, and so on. I call these "compliment invitations." Of course I always respond with, "Congratulations. You're obviously doing a lot of things right."

When managers explain how they have regular sales meetings, monitor calls and coach their reps, I respond with the sincere, well-deserved, "You are in the minority, and are a dedicated manager." They are, and probably see themselves as such.

Like much of sales, this suggestion and technique is neither complicated to understand nor difficult to execute.

But to do it consistently requires an awareness, a desire to do it, and a focus on the other person, not on what you want to sell. Do it, and you'll find communicating, and selling easier.

And by the way, you are a fine salesperson!



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Help Them See More Reasons To Buy then Not

The old "Ben Franklin Close" suggested you pull out a sheet of paper, make two columns, and list all the reasons for buying on one side, and the negative reasons on the other. Theoretically, the reasons for buying far outweigh the negatives. Even though the technique is old and many people can see the "technique" coming a mile away, the principle is sound. Here are ways to accomplish the same thing.

"Let's look at both sides of the issue."

"Well, let's weigh things out and see where we stand."

"Why don't we do a quick comparison with the pro's and cons."

"Let's put things in perspective here. Let's itemize the plusses and minuses."

Ask if Their Question is Important

I was watching Imus in the Morning on MSNBC, and he was talking by phone to Mike Francesa, a sports reporter. As Imus is apt to do, he deviated from the conversation at hand and blurted out, "Are you calling from your Mercedes?"

Francesca replied, "Is that important?"

Imus: "I guess not."

Then the conversation continued as if the question never happened.

What a great technique! We sometimes get irrelevant questions, that, if answered, could get us off track from the topic at hand. So, if you get an inane question, say something similar. For example, let's say the call is moving along nicely, and they jump in with,

"Are you a member of the Industry Standards Association?"

You could reply with, **"Is that a requirement for you?"**

"No, just wondering."

How to Be Productive When Your Computers Go Down

Do your computers ever lock up, or worse, go down completely? If your calling relies totally on the data provided by a temperamental computer system, you know you can sometimes be left staring at your screen like a zombie, cussing modern technology. However, you can still be productive during these times, IF you're prepared. Create a "Downtime File." Place in it lists of prospects you can cold call, or names and numbers of customers you can place value-added goodwill calls to. Since you'll have everything you'll need to make these contacts, you can salvage some positive production from the downtime.

Find Out If They're Even Worth Pursuing

You might have firsthand experience with situations where you had the best product/service at the best price, but the prospect still didn't buy from you. Frustrating, isn't it? Before putting in lots of work on bids and proposals, ask a simple, direct question:

"If we can provide you with the best solution, at the best price, will we work together?"

This helps air out any internal political issues that could prevent you from winning the business.

Whoa! Slow Down

I received a call from a salesperson who spoke as quickly as the guy who does the disclaimers at the beginnings or ends of car commercials on the radio. My perception was that the guy was nervous and not confident, hoping to spit out his spiel before I could jump in. Sure, if your prospect or customer speaks with a rapid-fire pace, you might want to speed up slightly. Otherwise, work to sound natural.

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