



TELEPHONE PROSPECTING AND SELLING REPORT

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Analysis Of A Horrible Prospecting Call

I typically analyze these types of calls in our Call Clinic section, but there was so much here I decided to move it to the featured cover story.

Hard to believe a salesperson could make so many mistakes in a short period of time, using so few words.

But it happened. I'll explain in detail.

I overheard a member of my staff talking to a caller:

"Well, that would be Art. I'll transfer you."

He put the call on hold and said to me, "Some guy wants to talk to someone about Internet marketing. He's being pretty evasive though."

Sounded like it might be good material for this newsletter.

"Hi, this is Art."

"Doug? Did you say Doug?"

What a great first impression this guy was making. I almost laughed out loud, recalling the movie "Multiplicity," where Michael Keaton WAS Doug, but the mutant clone kept calling him "Steve."

"No, this is Art."

"Oh, uh, yeah, hi Art. I'm _____ with (I didn't write down or remember the company name.) I just wanted to touch base to see how your Internet marketing was going."

"It is going just fantastic."

"Oh, good. Tell me what you're doing there."

I threw a brush off at him to see how he would handle it.

"Look, I'm busy (isn't everyone?) and not really interested."

He said thanks, and goodbye. End of call.

Wow. Let's examine how this guy never had a chance.

Mistake 1: Not Getting a Name

He didn't even get my name, therefore causing the comical "Doug" scenario, which blew him out of the water three seconds into the call.

Before getting to me, he could have simply started out the call by identifying himself and his company, and then asking, "I hope you can help me... what is the name of the person there who is responsible for your Internet marketing?"

Mistake 2: Being Evasive

Do some salespeople not realize that the person answering the phone for decision makers actually TALKS to the decision maker before putting it through?

Based only on what I had heard before I picked up the phone, I for the most part knew that this caller had zero chance of success—except for the basis for an article like this one.

Reminds me of the guy who emailed me with, "Look, I'm not letting some receptionist control my income."

Callers must be prepared to work **with** the personnel who are closest to our buyers, gain their trust, and discuss value where appropriate. You never know how influential they might be. In some cases they are decision makers. What do assistants say about you?

Mistake 3: Not Getting Information or Doing Homework

Again, because of Mistakes 2 and 3, he didn't ask any questions prior to asking to speak with me. Hmm, let's see, call me crazy, but it seems that if you're selling some type of Internet marketing, it would make sense that if you visited someone's website, and found out what type of Internet marketing they do now, then you would be much better prepared to put together a nice opening, and ask intelligent questions.

So, after asking for the decision maker's name, it's quite simple to say, "Great, so I can be sure that what I'm calling about has value for the boss, I'd like to ask a couple of questions. Please tell me ..."

Mistake 4: Horrible Opening Statement

To review, "Oh, uh, yeah, hi Art. I'm _____ with _____. I just wanted to touch base to see how your Internet marketing was going."

Come on now, read this again, and think about how absurd that question is. What in the world does he expect people to say?

(Continued on Page 5)

Sales Observations

A question I often get: How is my name pronounced? It's sub'-check. Polish. I do play around with it on the phone when I spell it, by starting out, "S-O-B" and waiting to hear a snicker.

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.

I get exhausted by continually exploring people to not only invest in themselves, but to USE what they learn. (Sadly, most people don't even take that first step and never take the initiative to feed their mind.) So often I'll see reps go through training, but then revert back to doing the same old things that get resistance. What do you do with the material you read here each month, and in my weekly email Tips? Ideally, you take a few ideas here each month, customize and apply them to your world, and then practice how you'll use them in the appropriate situations. That's how skills and habits are built. And sales. And that's motivating, isn't it?

You probably have heard about the mess that Hewlett Packard got into by hiring some corporate spies to access the personal telephone records of members of their board. The goons used "pretexting," which is posing as someone else—in this case, the actual board members—to get phone companies to give them access to the phone records. My prediction is that what this means for us as salespeople is that some companies, particularly larger ones, might get even more stingy with the information they provide to callers seeking to gather intelligence, like we do when prospecting. Therefore, it is critical that we provide full identification upfront, and if asked, be ready to explain why you're asking for the information. Give a version of your interest-creating opening, and then explain that's the reason you're asking for the info, so that you're sure you are in the right spot, or that you want to be certain that what you have would be of value for the company.

Telesales Success Inner Circle Update. The exciting new service I mentioned last month is getting closer. We're adding content as you read this, and putting some of the final touches on all of the various sales resources and networking tools you'll have access to. Stay tuned!

I always tell participants at sales training workshops, "Try to sound less like a salesperson, and you'll sell more." Just today I was talking to a prospect who called me looking for training at his national sales meeting early next year. The call went well, we agreed on the next steps, and he said, "What else do you feel you should provide me?" I said, "Well, I don't know. What else do you feel you need?" He said, "Wow, you're good!" Actually, I just applied common sense, not a sales technique.

What I'm Reading Right Now. If you sell to high-income people, either to them as consumers, or within their business, you need to devour "Selling to the Affluent," by Dr. Thomas Stanley. He also wrote "The Millionaire Next Door." This massive, near-500-page book gives specifics about finding, affiliating with, approaching, and selling high income individuals. And you'll probably see tons of ideas you might not have seen or thought of before. I know I did.

Go and have your best month ever!

Art



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training and workshops. To discuss what he might be able to do for you, call him at 800-326-7721, or (402)895-9399. E-mail him at ArtS@BusinessByPhone.com.

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Quit Doing Price Quotes. Personalize Proposals Instead

By Jim Meisenheimer

Why in the world would you ever do a price quote for a customer? Please don't tell me it's because a customer asked you.

If your customer asked you to lower your price by 75%, you wouldn't do that would you? Of course not. You'd be out of business within a week.

Are you tired of having to beat your competitor's price? Would you like to win more quotes at a higher price? There's a big reason why you should avoid sending price quotes to your customers.

The reason is simple, the first and only thing your customers will look at is your bottom line price. They will compare your price with your competitor's price. Best price usually wins.

Forget quotes and do proposals. Consider this: what do you want your proposal to do after you leave the sales call? If you want your proposal to represent you after you leave, you have to put more than a price on a piece of paper.

Ideally, your proposal should represent you professionally, long after you leave. Here's how to do it.

1. Personalize your proposal.

Put the customer's name, in large type, on the front page and if it's appropriate, use the words "especially prepared for William H. Anderson." People enjoy seeing their name up on the marquee, so make sure you put it there. If you're dealing with a committee make sure everyone gets a personalized copy with their name on it.

2. Show accessibility.

When you prepare proposals for products and services that represent significant dollar amounts, include a creative organizational chart. In each box include the name, the title, phone number, fax number, e-mail address, and a small photograph if possible. It screams accessibility and that's the point you want to hammer home.

3. Put them in the picture. If you really want to be creative scan the customer's logo or facility photograph next to your own logo or company photograph. Insert a plus sign (+) between photographs. It's a great way to say and show a "partnership."

4. Show your smiling face. Include your own photograph somewhere in the proposal to personalize the package. Remember, the best way to align yourself with potential customers is by being out-of-step with your primary competitor and in step with the decision-makers you're working with. Dare to be different. If you want to be remembered, do something memorable.

5. Highlight benefits. To justify your price, always include a benefits page. Your benefits page should include high impact factual statements about your company, products, and even you. List at least eight to ten factual statements followed by and reinforced with benefit statements. Benefit statements should be included on the next line. Benefit statements should be indented on the next line. To really emphasize the value, increase the type size slightly, and **bold face** the entire benefits line. Print the benefit line in red ink if you have a color printer or use a yellow highlighter to make the benefits really stand out and jump off the page.

The key is to show your benefits before you give your pricing. This approach emphasizes your benefits before it shows your price. Quotes are usually about price. The best price normally wins the sale.

Proposals should spell out your benefits and show your value by differentiating you, your products, and your company.

Bonus sales tip for you: Put your benefits page before your pricing page, to make sure they see your benefits before they see your price.

Double bonus sales tip: Avoid using words like cost and price too often in your sales proposal. Use the word

investment, wherever practical and possible.

When you take extra time to prepare your proposal, your customers will take notice. Your extra effort can turn ordinary quotes into an extraordinary sales proposal, loaded with value, for your customers.

Quotes seldom justify price, proposals loaded with benefits and value always do.

You don't always have to beat your competitor's price to win the sale. If your price is going to be higher, your proposal has to be much better. And remember, the more you talk about price, the lower it gets.

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 Respond When They Ask For A Lower Price

Bill Lee, author of "GROSS MARGIN: 26 Factors Affecting Your Bottom Line," (www.BillLeeOnline.com) suggests this response when someone is trying to beat down your price:

"Mr. Prospect, I can assure you that this is the very best price I am authorized to quote. We do our best to stay on top of the market. We sincerely believe that overall our prices are competitive. But there is a big difference between cost and price. Even if every individual line item we quote is not the lowest price in the market, we believe that when you do business with us, your overall cost will be lower."

How to Leverage Your Direct Mail In Prospecting

“Jim, should I send a letter to my prospect first and then make my follow up call? Will it make prospecting any easier?” This question is inevitably raised at some point in training seminars.

For years I used to say that mailing first and calling second never really had much of an impact on the overall success of a prospecting program. Times have changed. I have changed. Over the last year or so I have found that those who send a direct mail piece prior to their call have a decided edge over those who don't.

Lousy Letters

But, of course, there is one little catch. The letter has to be good. (duh!) Simple enough concept, but, oh, so hard to achieve. If the letter does not immediately catch my interest, if it does not educate me in some meaningful way, and if it does not quickly move me to the desire to want or learn more it is destined for the trash can.

Consequently, when the follow up call is made, the direct mail piece is a non-factor. At best, the prospect vaguely remembers or forgets it; at worst his or her impression is so negative that the call is doomed for failure before the opening sentence is complete. In this scenario the sales rep is left slack-jawed because his or her great opening has just been sunk. Then, just to make matters worse, the hapless rep will actually resend the same dreary letter at the customer's request. It, too, gets trashed, wasting everyone's time, energy and money. Sound frighteningly familiar?

Something Rotten In Denmark

The fact is that the overwhelming majority of direct mail stinks. Bad. Real bad. And if you can't structure a good prospecting letter, then don't bother. You are better off with your cold calls.

You Decide

But don't take my word for it. You decide. Let's have some interactive fun. Read the following openings of letters I received just last month.

Decide if you like them or not. (There might be one or two that don't stink). Write your comments below each. Next

month we'll look at them in detail and then come up with some strategies for making your prospecting letter more effective. Then we can create some powerful openers that can help leverage your direct mail effort.

Oh, one last thing: In case you are wondering, these are honest to goodness, real life, real drama, business letters.

Example 1

Dear James C. Domanski,

ABC Insurance brokers has been a solid part of our community for 27 years. Our brokers represent over 250 years of property and casualty insurance. Recently we were presented with the Herbie Twit Merit Award for outstanding service. We offer the most competitive ...

Your Comments:

Example 2

Dear Sir,

In today's ever changing market you need an edge. Something that will make a difference. Something that will create impact. Something that gets through the clutter. What you need is the EXZ Edge. It's revolutionary. It will change the way you think.

Your Comments:

Example 3

Dear Mr. Bomansky,

My guess is that you are a smart man. Smart men make smart choices. Here's a smart choice you won't regret.

Your Comments:

Example 4

Imagine leaving a telephone message so powerful, so effective and so compelling that your prospects will call back immediately!

Dear Jim,

If all your prospects returned your

calls, what would it do for your sales results? How about your commissions? What if only 50% returned your calls? Still happy?

Your Comments:

Example 5

Reward yourself—for a change

Jim Domanski,

Travel is more fun when its on your own terms. That's why B&H Hotels & Resorts Inc. along with Tibbley National and Goodbar are pleased to provide exclusive TRAVEL miles reward miles to CFLP Association members.

Your Comments:

Example 6

Dear Jim

As one executive to another, I appreciate your busy schedule—but I also know your priorities. One trend that poses a real threat to every company's top and bottom line is the increasing difficulty of winning and keeping customers. The simple fact is that today's customers are more sophisticated and have more choices. From this position of power they demand more personalized service and faster, more direct access to every part of your business. Companies that can't adapt to this new business model are losing their customers to those who can.

Your Comments:

Next month let's start to build a good prospecting letter. Good selling.

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(Continued From Page 1)

"Oh, my Internet marketing isn't going well at all. I'm glad you called. I bet you can help me."

Right.

There are two purposes for the opening:

1. Put them in a positive, receptive, frame of mind, by mentioning an item of interest ... a possible result or benefit you might be able to deliver, and,

2. Move to the questioning phase of the call. BUT, the first objective must be established.

Mistake 5: Asking Questions When They Don't See A Reason to Answer

Again, as part of Mistake 4, if we don't put them in a positive frame of mind, but then jump into questions, they don't have a good reason to answer, therefore the call goes down in flames.

So short of a call, but yet so many opportunities to screw up. And this guy hit most of them. Sadly, I see this all of the time.

Worse, he probably believes that prospecting for him is "just a numbers game." Make so many calls, and you're that much closer to getting a yes. Actually, he's that much closer to getting another no, and he's getting really good at making bad calls.

If you place prospecting calls, analyze each of these mistakes to be sure they're not part of your calls, and practice the alternatives instead.

"If you limit your actions to things that nobody can possibly find fault with, you will not do much."

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson

Avoid The Clichés

Do you use "corporatespeak," lacing your conversation with common business clichés? Factiva, a Dow Jones Company, looked at 1,447 media sources for the first seven months of this year to get an idea of which of today's clichés are used most often in the press. The hands-down winner was "at the end of the day." Here are the others in the top five:

"in the black"

"in the red"

"level playing field"

"time and again"

Prejudging Leads Can Be Dangerous

Prejudging the outcome of a lead, inquiry, or any name for that matter could be harmful to your sales health. Case in point: there's the old story about the manager who had a box of special, "hot" sales leads he kept locked in his desk. Only the reps who met the prior period's quote would get access to these. The reps who called these always had better success rates with them. However, these leads were no different than any other lead. Except that in some cases they were older! Obviously the leads were better because the reps **thought so**. If you're going to assume anything, assume that you'll sell them all. If you want to doubt something, doubt your limitations.

Define Your Experience

What does "experience" mean to you? It is a word that might mean nothing to your listeners. If you feel they are interested in your track record, give examples of results. Instead of, "We have experience in that area," tell them,

"We have worked with four companies in that industry and helped every one beat production quotas."

"I have a list of satisfied customers who have used it."

"For six years companies have been coming back to us, and referring us to others."

Sales Tips From Telesales College Attendees

You can waste a lot of time creating price quotes and proposals for people who can't buy from you, or who are simply trying to get another price to use against their existing supplier. And, in most cases, if a purchasing agent calls, they are among the few people who buy solely on price. Ed Holmwood with Midwest Computer supply always asks this question when a purchasing agent or assistant calls out of the blue asking for a price quote:

"Who's making the request?"

This way, he can now contact the person who really is going to benefit from the product or service, and then a conversation can begin about value, not just price.

On voice mails, Pamela Crane with The Project Reports says, after leaving her value statement, "...if it's inconvenient for you to call me back, I will call you back Friday at 10 a.m..." She says this has increased her call-backs 30%.

Websites can be a wealth of information when prospecting, in many different ways. Blair Wagner, with Law Bulletin Information Source checks the sites of prospects before calling. Whenever he sees a prospect is a member of an association he is not familiar with, he then researches that association to see if he can get a list of its members, all of whom are prospects for his services.

Andre Rodriguez with Brokers Worldwide said that experienced outside sales reps can be a great resource for sales reps new to a territory or company. Naturally they know the main buying motivators of typical prospects and customers, and also can give specific tips about how to handle certain customers and prospects in the field.

In The Age of Email Overload, Fax Instead

By Joe Catal

Here are some time-tested fax tips that work for me.

Just the Fax

If you have info you fax on a regular basis, highlight it with a dark magic marker for certain key points. Always hand print with a black medium point magic marker to fax. Again, print, don't write longhand! You can also use the self-adhesive laminates to keep your info always in good condition. You can get them at any office supply store. Yes, they'll fax through.

Don't Use an Ordinary Fax Cover Sheet

There are humorous books out that can be used as fax material. Your fax cover sheet doesn't have to be boring! Make it stand out. I send all types of funny faxes. Don't send anything offensive. Look through your bookstore or go to an online bookstore and type in "fax cover sheets" and you'll see books already made up with fax cartoons and funny drawings. Just make some copies of the ones that pertain to your situation and use them. Show your prospect you're different from the run of the mill salespeople. If you don't want to use humorous faxes, make sure your fax cover sheet explains what you do. Don't use an ordinary fax coversheet. Those generic ones you buy at the store or get with your fax software are boring and useless.

Your fax cover sheet should be like a business card.

Look for Articles to Send

Be sure to scan the Internet, papers, and magazines for articles written about your type of product or service. Include these articles in the info you send to people. People like to know that other people have had good success with your type of product or service, plus, people tend to believe more of what they read than what they hear. That's why those gossip newspapers sell so much!

Call Back After Sending the Fax

Whenever sending a fax, always call back to make sure the person received it. This will avoid them saying "I never received your info." I tell the person who answers the phone that I just sent a three page fax to Jim that he's expecting. Can you make sure he gets that on his desk for me? Don't assume that because your fax machine showed it went through that they got it. If it's a big company, the papers can get mixed in with all the others. It's not easy being a superstar. It takes hard work to do the little things low producers don't want to do.

Fax to the Other Influencer

Sometimes when you call someone back after faxing them info, you find out they haven't run it by their office manager or other influential decision maker. Here's a way to avoid that. After you fax your contact, call back and ask for the name of the other decision maker. The **next day** fax the same package to them. Write a note telling them that John (your contact) will be talking to you about our product. Tell them that if they have any questions to call you personally. Many times the owner hasn't even told the manager about it. The manager will then go to the owner and bring it up! They'll actually have a one-on-one meeting about it. If they're interested, the manager (influential decision maker) will more than likely call you. Once he's convinced, you have a great chance of getting the deal. This technique may also get you to bypass the "committee meeting" stall, and speed the sales process up. It's very effective.

Send Names

If you've done business with a large recognizable name company, tell people about it. A lot of people will think if they went with you, you must be all right. Send the names of those companies with the info you send out. Also, if someone says they want to run it by their marketing department, you

can say:

"Jim, some of the largest companies in the industry such as ABC Corp. have already done all the research for you. They found that we were the best company to go with."

In essence what you're saying is that the best experts in the industry agree that you're the best to go with. It lets the prospect realize he can't compete with that type of expertise, and it may not be necessary to ask his own people, if he really does in fact have a marketing dept.

Have Them Send You Stuff

Get the prospect to send **you** information. If a prospect wants you to send info, you can also ask them to fax you info on their company so you'll be better prepared to discuss their needs when you call back. If they fax you, you have a pretty good prospect.

Send Info ONLY for a Reason

If you agree to fax info, say,

"From what I've explained to you today, along with the info you'll be getting, if we check out and everything else is to your liking, what happens next?"

Or, **"From what I've explained to you today, along with the info you'll be getting, if we check out and everything is to your liking, would there be anything you can think of that would keep you from going ahead with this?"**

They should say they'll buy. If not, find out why you're sending the info in the first place.

(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. Or order, call 800-326-7721, or go to www.BusinessByPhone.com)



Each month in the Call Clinic, Art addresses either calls he's received, client calls he's heard, or questions from reps. To submit your question, email Art at ArtS@BusinessByPhone.com.

Ask Questions When They Say They Are Not Looking For New Suppliers

Art, Our company sells its own line of safety glasses and I had called on a big industrial supply catalog company wanting to get our products into their catalog. The response I get commonly from companies with big catalogs like that is "At this time we are not looking for additional safety eyewear suppliers" How would you personally handle this kind of response? Or how would you set your company up for future contact with this company? Would you send a follow up letter to them? Thanks for any helpful insight,

Gary Gabrielse, Global Vision Eyewear

Art's Response

Gary, most people are not actively looking for something different than what they have. Therefore, the strategy should be,

- for future reference, what is the process for evaluating new products?
- who is involved? This is important since it's probably not just one person.
- what is the decision-making criteria?
- how did they choose what they use now?
- under what circumstances might they look at something new?
- when and if they do evaluate something else, ask if you can be involved.

And, yes, with a company the size of the one you mentioned (name omitted here), I would have a "stay-in-

touch" strategy, being certain you stay in contact with them through email, fax, letter, and newsletters. You want to be sure your name is in the forefront when and if they do decide to do something.

Art

Gary's Results After Using the Questions

I wanted to thank you for emailing me those sales questions you would ask in regards to large accounts. After getting an emailed response back from a large prospect, the largest safety products company in the world with operations in 25 countries and sales in the billions, I asked the buyer the questions that you had sent me and he took the time to send me a very nice detailed reply to my questions and even invited me to their corporate offices, and if I could not go there then to meet him for lunch and/or a drink at a upcoming trade show that we will both be attending. Thanks Again,

Gary Gabrielse

Question About Open-Ended Questions

Dear Art,

I feel like I know you, I've been reading your newsletters for ages! I have a question for you, sort of related to the recent tips in your newsletter. Our sales manager is infuriated whenever one of us salespeople uses a closed question. We sell electronic parts, and we must always say,

"What electronics are you buying today?" instead of,

"Do you have any requirements for electronics today?"

Now, we are all experienced phone salespeople, and understand the benefit of an open-ended question. However, I believe that customers get tired of the same approach on every call.

So, sometimes I cheat and use a closed question because it just "fits" better, and the customer and I have a good rapport, and if he needs something he will definitely mention it no matter how I ask the question. Then our manager hisses at us "WHAT are you buying, not ARE you buying" etc. It's very annoying!

So, I'm hoping you will give me your insights into the usage or over-emphasis of this sales technique. I'd like to have the option to do whatever seems natural or conversational. Our manager says that we have to have it drilled into us at all times so we don't get used to asking the closed questions (kind of like trained dogs?). Please let me know your opinion.

Best regards, Lois

Art's Response

Lois,

Sorry, but for the most part I'm with your manager on this one. First, I must stress I'm not suggesting salesy, cheesy, goofy-sounding old-school techniques, like "If I could show you a way to save money, you'd want that wouldn't you?"

My philosophy is, let's say whatever has the greatest chance of minimizing resistance and maximizing the chance of getting the answer we want.

Saying "Do you have any requirements for electronics today?" is too easy to answer no to. You say that if they have a need they'll tell you regardless of the question. Perhaps. But that is order-taking, not selling. Selling is asking questions, and getting them into a frame of mind where they might now be thinking about a need or pain or problem they weren't thinking of before your call.

And, I believe you're probably over-estimating their perception of your use of open-ended questions. I doubt if they're analyzing the technique. Think about it: when someone asks a question, the listener's tendency is to think about how they'll answer.



Be Prepared For Their Callback

Ever been caught unprepared when someone returns your call after you've left a message? Here's a way to quickly re-familiarize yourself with your reason for calling that person. Stick a post-it note on your desk for each contact you've left a message for. Jot down your objectives/reasons for the call, along with the key words and names you can use to call up the record. Keep the notes in an easily-accessible place. When the call comes in, immediately review the note, so you're reminded of why you called.

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?"

This Closing Question "Sounds Good"

A closing technique that's a bit overused by consumer telemarketers is the "OK?" tacked on to the back of a recommendation. As in, "So what I'll do is send out that credit card to you, OK?"

You can't argue with its effectiveness, though. It works. When buyers hear a suggestion that sounds at least semi-good, the OK elicits an, "Oh, why not. Go ahead," response.

A variation of this that helps you not sound like a scripted telemarketer is the "Sounds good?" question. Make a recommendation, then punctuate it with **"Sounds good?"** For example, **"So Mike, this looks like the best alternative for you. How about I ship out a case. Sounds good?"**

End With This Question

Here's a good way to wrap up your questioning before you make your sales recommendation "What haven't I covered yet that's important to you?" If there is something that's relevant to what they want in your type of product/service, this ensures they'll tell you about it.

Listen For Their Feelings About Changes

When your prospect or customer volunteers information on any changes at his company, find out what his feelings are about them. This can provide tremendous insight about his personal needs and ideas. For example,

Prospect "Yeah, we've had a major restructuring here regarding how we need to report our inventory to corporate."

Sales Rep **"I see. How is that affecting you?"**

Prospect "It's created a lot more work for my people."

Sales Rep **"What are your feelings about the change?"**

Prospect "It stinks. I need to get twice the work done with the same staff."

If you just happen to sell something that helps to save time (in this case) you've uncovered a goldmine of information to help them sell themselves.

They're Not Just "Accounts"

When phoning past purchasers, sales reps in all industries like to talk about accounts, as in "...and I was reviewing your account." A subscriber pointed out that referring to a customer as an "account" is a cold, impersonal way to speak with the customer. Instead, say things like,

"We provided you with . . .,"

"You used our . . .," and,

"We were able to help you with . . ."

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