



TELEPHONE PROSPECTING AND SELLING REPORT

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Don't OVERCOME Objections. Create Doubt.

As major league baseball enters the postseason, watch an entire game and you'll likely see a manager, coach or player question an umpire's call, or perhaps even throw a tantrum.

One thing that I've learned from years of coaching baseball and girl's softball, which is common sense but not usually practiced by most people, is that umpires don't like to be told they're wrong. Tell an umpire that a pitch was a strike when he or she called it a ball, and they don't say, "You know, you're right. Thanks for that. I'll change the call."

In fact, even if they DID blow the call and were wrong, they become very defensive in their stance. Many times they throw the arguer out of the game.

Makes sense, doesn't it?

When was the last time someone thanked YOU for telling them they were flunked out wrong? It doesn't happen.

Even though everyone resents being told they're wrong—often getting defensive—most sales training suggests sales reps do exactly that: counter objections and resistance with slick, canned phrases, with insidious names like the "Boomerang Technique," which inherently tells people they're wrong and makes them feel just slightly lower than topsoil.

KEY POINT

You'll never change anyone's mind by preaching AT them.

For example, think about beliefs you feel strongly about, something political, moral, or even a favorite sports team. If someone simply started refuting everything you believed in, you

would likely strengthen your stance, and think of why the other person is wrong.

You can, however, help someone to first DOUBT their beliefs, which is the initial hurdle in opening them up to your ideas.

Get them to question their position regarding your offer or ideas. People believe **their** ideas more than they do yours. You can't tell them they're wrong and expect success, but you can help them to doubt their perceptions, which causes them to lower their guard and at least be open to what you have to say.

Consider this: in order for someone to change their mind (including you) people need to go through a process where they first have to look at their belief and say, "Well, maybe there is another way to look at it." Then they begin softening their position to a point where they might consider other options.

You can do all of this with doubt-creating questions. Here's how.

How To Create The Doubt

1. Brainstorm for, and then understand the objections you commonly hear. Write them out. Then list reasons people voice that objection.

For example, when they say "Your price is too high," does that mean they can get it cheaper down the street? Or, did they have a predetermined price figure in mind? Or, do they not have enough money in the budget? You'll need to know their rationale (their problem) before you can address the symptom: the objection.

2. For each of the objection reasons, write out questions that uncover their rationale, and plants seeds of doubt. For example, for the "price is too high," questions could be,

"Are we talking about just the price itself, or the long-term value?"

"What are we being compared to?"

"What price figure did you feel would be appropriate for what you're looking to receive?"

"Take price out of the picture for a moment; do you like this unit better than any other you've seen?"

Or, take the situation of 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 wholesaler could use a canned "objection rebuttal," trotting out 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?"

Approach objections in a non-adversarial way, and ask questions to root out the reasons. Go through this process, and you'll be better prepared to ask the right questions to plant the seeds of doubt in their mind, opening them up to considering your ideas, therefore softening their resistance.



Sales Observations

Art's Telesales Success Inner Circle of Elite Sales Professionals To Be Announced Soon!

Within the next couple of months I'll have a major announcement for you, offering you membership in my Telesales Success Inner Circle of elite sales professionals. Members will receive access to resources helping them be more successful in sales than they've ever been.

We're still firming up and building all of the exciting, valuable resources members will receive. As a sneak peak, here are just some of resources you will receive:

You'll get,

-this newsletter in the mail on a monthly basis

-online electronic access to the current issue, and ALL back issues to January 2005

-online access to the archives of the past six year's of my weekly email newsletter

-a weekly audio tip from me you can access online, or download to your iPod

-membership in social network for sales reps, kind of a MySpace for professional sales reps. This will go beyond the typical discussion forum, and enable you to connect with others in order to share questions, success stories, find a buddy or mentor to review or exchange recorded

calls or transcripts with, share sales leads, write your own blog, or whatever you'd like!

There will also be a higher, Platinum level of membership for the really serious sales pros, which will offer even more, including,

-a bi-weekly video sales tip by me

-monthly hour-long teleseminars and interviews with successful pros in the field. (We'll likely also post the audios online for your access, and mail you the CD's

-quarterly call-in consulting days when I'll be available to work with you personally. And more!

And managers, I haven't forgotten about you. We'll have a level for managers that will include everything I've mentioned so far, PLUS,

-a closed-door manager's only forum where you can network with other managers on the issues you face every day

-teleseminars by experts on the topics that most greatly affect your day-to-day operation, personnel, and profitably of your department. You'll also be able to sign up all of your reps at the Platinum level at a substantial discount.

Again, we're in the process of building the premier resource for sales reps who use the phone to prospect, service, and sell. Watch for details within the next couple of months. If you'd like to be one of the first to test the program before it's released to everyone, please let me know. Call me at 800-326-7721.

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.

Maybe you've had an experience like this ... I stayed at a typically nice Marriot hotel. Pleasant service. Seems to me the staff was trained well. Most everyone I came in contact with looked me in the eye and always had a courteous question or friendly comment.

Upon checking out, the trend continued as the front desk person asked, "How was your stay?"

"Very good, thank you."

She struggled a bit with a misbehaving laser printer that wouldn't spit out my receipt, then finally coaxed it into cooperating. Handing me the receipt, she again said, "So, how was your stay Mr. Sobczak?"

"Just as good as it was when you asked me two minutes ago," I joked.

Red-faced, she apologized, and improvised nicely: "Just wanted to make sure!"

The lesson here? I'm all for getting in the habit of saying the right things—most salespeople never get to that point. They "wing" it, and often go down in flames. But, be sure you're saying things for a reason, and LISTENING to the answer, which you then use to formulate your next statement or question (which also should be something you've thought about and prepared for).

Go have your best month ever!

Art Sobczak is President of Business By Phone, and editor/publisher of TPSR, and author of several books and audio training programs. He develops and delivers results-getting telesales 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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Want to Sell More? Become "Awesome"

By Jim Meisenheimer

What's the one thing starting today that you could start doing, stop doing, or change that would have a dramatic impact on your client relationships?

Consider the word AWESOME and all that means. To be awesome is to be formidable, imposing, grand, impressive, outstanding, wonderful, excellent, and even remarkable.

Most salespeople don't even think in terms of being AWESOME.

They walk around doing a great imitation of benign mediocrity. It doesn't take much to leap from the ordinary to the extraordinary, but it does take effort. It's all about leaving a great first impression, not merely a good one.

It's about delighting your customers, not just satisfying them. It's about rising above the crowd, not being lost in it.

Here are some ideas for you on how to be AWESOME for your customers.

A - Ask good customer questions. While questions can be open and closed, they can also be wide and deep.

The wide questions are surface questions i.e. "How's it going, how's business," and "Any other any problems I can help you with today?"

A deep question always leaves its mark i.e. "What would have to happen for you to consider us as your best supplier?"

Another really inspired question is, "How do you measure success when working with your current supplier?"

Are you asking quality questions? If not, why not?

W - Work your priorities and prioritize your work. To be really effective you must be able to distinguish between what is urgent and what is important. Be careful not to start the very fires you're trying to put out. For example, eliminate the following from your voice mail message, "If it's really important page me or call me on my cell phone."

Get a grip, get a life, and begin ev-

eryday with the list (prioritized with numbers) of the six most important things you want to complete and don't encourage the distractions. Develop the habit of sticking to your list of priorities and only deviate from your list if a higher priority lands on your desk.

E - Energize yourself every day with a positive attitude. People with positive attitudes live longer, enjoy life more, and tend to be more likable, from their customers perspective. I learned a long time ago, we choose to affect or infect the people we meet every day. Don't bring your personal problems to work because they never add value to your customers. If life has dealt you a difficult set of cards right now, deal with them privately and put your troubles on a trouble tree when you make your first sales call.

Remember, your customers have their own problems, so there's no need to burden them with yours. People with positive attitudes are enthusiastic, animated, excited, smiling, and always expect the best things to happen.

S - Style is important. If you agree you must feel like a chameleon. Most strained interpersonal relationships are created by different styles.

One of the biggest keys to selling success is the art of adapting your selling style to your customers' buying style. This is easy to say and hard to do. To learn more about behavioral styles, read articles, buy books and listen to audio training on the subject. This is one subject where ignorance is definitely not bliss.

O - Others focused. Here are some ideas for you: don't make people feel invisible; remember, you can't smile enough on the telephone or in person; to stay connected ask people who get your voice mail message to leave their e-mail address and telephone number; watch your body language; buy a composition notebook to record all your relationship-building ideas; add the words "for you" to the end of your sentences; every four months record your end of your telephone calls to improve the quality of your calls, blaming is shaming so don't do it; always take notes to

demonstrate that you care and you are listening, and always take the time to say "Thank you" to everyone who contributes to your success.

M - Master the business basics. Listen to your voice mail message. If it doesn't sound upbeat, enthusiastic and professional change it. Secure commitments for who is going to do what and by when. Form the habit of writing personal handwritten notes using a fountain pen. It's a great way to be a high-touch person in the high-tech world we live in today. Maintain your focus on the other person, especially customers.

E - Enthusiasm and passion. Too many people are dying on the job today and still working. Some people walk into a room and breathe life into it. Other people walk into the same room and do their best to vent all the oxygen. Get excited about your work. If you don't like it, change it. Your life is too important and too short, to waste it doing something you hate doing. Be yourself and avoid trying to imitate somebody else. Have an attitude of gratitude. Say "thank you" often. That kind gesture will make someone's day a better one. Enthusiasm is contagious and so is the negative stuff.

If you want to take, your sales career to the next level learn do the unthinkable. Quit saying "I've always done it this way." Quit following the crowd. Take a new path to solve old customer problems. The old way may not be the better way. If you're too comfortable, it's time to change. Always aim higher and you'll be rewarded handsomely.

Being AWESOME is no small task, especially when the customer is doing the evaluation. If you dare to be different, strive to be effective, and are attentive to your clients' needs, you too can be AWESOME.

(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.")



A Magic Word To Help Close The Sale

Just suppose for one brief minute that you could simply pull a trigger or a lever and then...BAM... your customer would automatically buy.

Would you like that?

Well, you can...to some degree...if you understand a bit about the art and science of persuasion. Sound farfetched? You might be surprised. This month we'll take a look at a "trigger" that you can use to influence your customers and to get them to take action and/or buy.

Understanding Influence

First and foremost, if you haven't bought "Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion" by Robert. B. Cialdini, then drop everything and do so now. If you're even remotely involved in marketing or sales, this book is a must. Cialdini, a psychologist, looks at why some people are remarkably persuasive and the six secrets behind our powerful influence to comply.

The 'Because' Trigger

By way of an example, Cialdini refers to a set of experiments conducted by Harvard professor Ellen Langer concerning the use of the 'because' trigger. The 'because' trigger is based on a well known principle of human behavior which says that if we ask someone to do us a favor, we'll be more successful if we provide a reason.

Langer tested this in three experiments. In the first experiment, Langer asked a small favor of people waiting in line to use a copying machine. "Excuse me," she said, I have five pages. May I use this Xerox machine because I am in rush?" Ninety-Four percent of those asked let her skip ahead to the front of the line.

In the second experiment, she said, "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine?" The rate of compliance dropped to 60%. It would seem fairly evident why this might happen. In the first case, those waiting in line were given additional information ("I'm in a rush.") or a reason.

But Langer conducted a final experiment to reveal that additional information was not the reason for compliance..

In the third experiment, Langer asked "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine because I have to make some copies?" Incredibly, 93% of those asked allow her to step to the front of the line and make copies. It appears that it was not the 'reason' behind the request that led to compliance but rather the use of the word 'because.'

Cialdini explains that the word 'because' triggers an automatic compliance response from people even when they were not given a subsequent reason to comply. In our crazy, complex and hectic world human beings have learned to make life a little easier and a little more manageable by disseminating information into manageable packets. These are "triggers". Triggers refer to those things that elicit a response in our behavior. Hence, many of us have been conditioned when we hear the word 'because.' We accept that whatever follows is legitimate and rational...whether it is or not.

Skeptical?

Yeah. So was I. But I conducted my own set of 'because' experiments with my wife and kids over several weeks. The requests focused on making coffee and getting a back rub. While hardly as noteworthy and scientific as the study from Harvard, the use of 'because' was decidedly more effective and successful regardless of the reason I attached to it. (They still haven't caught on...much to my benefit!)

I tell you: I ain't so skeptical now.

Applying it to the Sales World

So what does that mean to those of you in sales? How can we apply this? There appears to be two ways you can use this.

1. Tactical

When explaining how your product works, how it functions or how it can benefit the client, use "**because.**" Sprinkle it liberally in your message. For instance:

"...**because** our posters arrive weekly, the look and the message changes constantly so that it catches your employees attention, and **because** it catches their attention, the awareness level of safety increases significantly. This means

a safer work environment and less worker comp claims."

"...I recommend our TENS program because we do all the paperwork for you which means less hassle and headache..."

"...I recommend you try our brand toner because it is of equal quality and value and because it will yield a better margin for you and your store."

It's not rocket science. It's simple and straightforward.

2. Strategic

Use because to explain a special offer or the reason for a sale. For example:

"**Because** our buyer over purchased, we can offer these items at a reduced cost..."

"**Because** of the recent political events and because of the recent economic turn down, we are offering our program at a 20% discount..."

"**Because** there is no middleman, we can offer the same products to you at less price than your current supplier..."

Easy isn't it?

Summary

I don't know the precise impact 'because' has on the selling process. Obviously, it doesn't guarantee a sale but I know that there is evidence that supports its use. I know I have tested it in an ad hoc manner and found it works. I do know that it makes sense. I do know it can't hurt. And I do know that it just might give me (and you) that 'edge' in selling that we're all looking for.

And *because* it is so simple to use, I recommend you get started now and see what it does for your sales.

Good Selling!

(Jim Domanski is President of the Telemanagement Consulting Group, a telemarketing consulting and training firm. Contact him at 35 VanStone, Kanata, Ontario, Canada. 613-591-1998)

Turn-Around Phrases That Work

By Scott Love

What if there was one single phrase that you could use with all of your prospects that would turn them around to consider buying your product or service? There is.

I learned this phrase several years ago and it became a daily staple of my search practice. The phrasing isn't as important as much as the energy that you need to say it, so follow these three steps to becoming more powerful in your persuasion abilities.

First, understand and believe in the value of your service. Will what you sell make a difference in the lives of others? It must. The first sale is really to yourself. If you have any doubt about what you are 'pitching' to your prospect, then it will come across. If you have a tough time with this then forget about your commission. Just think about the contribution. Focus on the contribution before your commission and you'll earn more commissions.

Second, follow this line of phrasing the next time your prospect is hesitant:

"That's fine, Joe. But you really need to consider this. You really do. Why don't we set up a twenty minute block of time on the phone together and I'll tell you what I'm talking about. And you can decide for yourself if you want go forward. I'm okay with whatever you decide."

You are telling them they need to consider it. Is it pushy? Not if you have belief in what you sell. This is where you need to increase your energy and the commitment that you have about what you are promoting. This is where your belief in your service takes on its own life form and creates anticipation and energy, which is then transferred to your prospect based on the conviction in your voice. The phrasing isn't really that important compared to the conviction that is felt by you that you transfer to your prospect. But the phrasing is authentic, congruent, and convincing.

Third, wait for your prospect to respond and see how many of them actually follow your lead. People want to feel in control of their lives. By using this phrasing, you are giving control back to them. Your prospects are tired of being

manipulated and pushed to buy and are sick of all the spin in the world. Give them something different. Give them authentic enthusiasm and a rock-solid belief that what you are offering will give them the benefit that they deserve.

Forget about pushing them to the close of the deal or sale. Instead, lead them to the sale. There is a void of leadership in our society and people want to follow someone who has their own best interests at heart and someone who has an authentic belief in trying to provide a contribution to them. If you think this way and use this logic and phrasing, you'll be amazed at how much of a difference one small phrase can make.

(Scott Love improves the performance of recruiters and the margins of search firms and staffing agencies. His training website, www.recruitingmastery.com, has become one of the largest free internet training sites for the industry. To have him show your staff how to produce more than they thought possible, call him at 828-225-7700.)

Explain, But Do Not Make An Excuse

How you word your statements can make a tremendous difference in the way you and your organization is perceived. For example, think about the impressions you form based on these comments:

Rep 1: "I'm sorry your order has been delayed. We were out-of-stock on that product, but it was sent on the 21st."

Rep 2: "We were back-ordered again, and it's always a few days before they get caught up. They'll get around to it."

Rep 1: "I must have made a mistake in communicating your order to the Billing Department. I'll take care of it today so that you get the discount."

Rep 2: "Somebody screwed up in Billing again. Third time this week."

People want to hear explanations, not excuses. And, they want to be informed as to what is going to happen next. They don't care about your internal problems, and obviously the statements by Rep 2 can be damaging.

How to Get In The Door and Create An Impression

Bob Armstrong, VP of Sales and Marketing for KAZV-TV-14 in Modesto, CA, shared the following tip. While it applies specifically to his outside sales situation, think about how you can use it in conjunction with your phone prospecting or sales call.

For eight years while doing durable medical equipment sales and adjustable bed sales, I'd bring a double layer chocolate cake (\$8-10) and a plant/flower (\$2-\$3) to every potential customer. I told them at the door, that "My mother and father always told me, never to go to someone's home empty-handed. And I've always done what mom and dad taught me to do. May I come in please?"

I'd enter the doorway and proceed to the kitchen, where I'd gain rapport and begin my presentation. My commissions were triple what other reps were making by my decision to create a RAOK (Random Act of Kindness) before I asked for the sale. Afterall...our clients were happy with their gift, they knew I was someone special that would do something nice for them, and got the business more often than most other sales people. Oh, and the plant? I'd place my business card in a "Flower fork" the plastic forks for holiday plant giving. (You can also use a mail label sticker too).

For those clients who were really uneasy, I'd loosen them up a little and tell them, that even if they don't purchase from me today, that's okay. But everytime they go to water that beautiful little plant, they'll think of me. And when they think of me, they'll think of all the blessings they missed out on, because they didn't do what they knew they should've done. I left the card or sticker on the plant, so they could get ahold of me, if they were one of the 3 or 4 out of ten that didn't buy initially from me.

This technique is amazing and pays for itself over and over again!



Powerful Prospecting Pointers

By Joe Catal

Be an Expert Qualifier

Invest more time with **serious** prospects, and minimize the time spent chasing “shoppers.” Just because they spoke to you once doesn't necessarily make them good. Become an expert on qualifying prospects. Rate them on a scale from 1-10. If they rate lower than eight, don't spend too much time chasing them. Top producers know who to keep working and who to get rid of and replace with a new prospect. You want quality prospects. You know you're reading people well when your 8-10's are buying 75% of the time. If they're not, this method will teach you how to qualify them better.

Cut the Slang, Buddy

Never speak to people using slang, it makes you come off as uneducated. Cool man, I'm your home boy, awesome, etc.

Set a New Prospect Goal

Depending on your industry, you should set a daily goal of how many new prospects you want to find each day. I personally try to find five qualified prospects each day. If you can do that on a regular basis, your sales will soar. In my industry, a good phone rep can close 20-25% of those prospects. It's a lot easier to have the mindset that you're going to find five prospects rather than you have to make a hundred calls today.

Have a Plan, and Stick to It

Don't call someone up to have a conversation about nothing. Make sure the person knows that you're calling for their business and nothing else.

When They ask About Company Size ...

If a customer asks if your company is large or small, use that to your advantage.

If it is small, tell them,

“The owner likes to keep it small, so we can give more personalized service, and keep the overhead low so we can

pass those savings onto you.”

If it's large, tell them,

“Because of the size of the orders we put into our vendors, you get a substantial discount that we pass on to you.”

As you can see, you can use the small or large company image to your favor. Large or small, make sure they understand they're dealing with a major organization, not just an individual.

If They Hang Up on You, Move On

If someone hangs up on you, don't waste your time calling back and asking them why. That's a waste of time and shows your desperation. Ask yourself, Do you really want to argue and fight with people and try to prove you are right, or do you want to make sales? Just dial the next number on your list and move on.

Consider the Source

Always consider the source of your information. Getting info about the company from the VP is a lot better than getting it from the receptionist. (However, some receptionists DO know more about the company than some VP's & owners!)

Consider a Weekend Call

Depending on the type of person or industry your calling, many people can be called on Saturdays. If you have a hard-to-reach prospect, you may want to try on a Saturday morning.

Words That Really Mean “NO”

Over the years I've found certain words and phrases that appear to be positive, but when you read between the lines, they almost always mean “no.” Here are some.

- “I'm going to think about this seriously.”

Ask him what he plans on thinking about. He won't be able to tell you.

- Complimenting you on your selling skills or telling you you're a good salesper-

son, or saying, “You can work for me anytime.”

Ask him if he's so impressed with your skills why he's not going to do business with you.

- “I'm going to consider this next year.”

Call his bluff: **“I'll mark you on my calender for next February 19th at 10 AM, is that good for you?”**

- “I want to do it but not at this time.”

Yeah, maybe in his next life.

- “We haven't had time to make a decision yet.”

I've replied with, **“How much time do you need, forever?”** If the person laughs nervously, he's scared to death he'll have to make a decision.

- Refuses to schedule the next step in your sales process.

If he was serious, wouldn't it be logical to want to go to the next step?

- When a prospect uses the word **interesting**, this usually means no.

Ask her what's so interesting about it? If she starts telling you benefits, tell her since she sees the benefits this could have for her, why she's not going to order it? Some of you may not agree with everything I said, so I suggest you try the responses out for yourself.

Follow Your System

To be the tops in your field, you have to have a method and system. You have to know why you're doing certain things. Nothing you do should ever be haphazard. You need to know every detail of the system you've incorporated to be successful. There are no gray areas in selling. Everything is black and white.

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



Questions From Fellow Sales Pros

Q. Art, Just to set the scene... We are an import auto parts supplier that sells exclusively to the wholesale trade (independent auto repair shops). We do 99% of our business over the phone and online.

One of our territory reps (RB) was in the field working in support of our inside sales reps. He was visiting a customer's auto repair shop. The shop owner was telling RB how he had spent \$1,400 dollars with us this week. RB thanked him and told him how much we appreciate his business. The customer went on to say "I have spent so much with you that my old supplier, "ABC Company," called and asked why I had not bought anything this week. I told him it's just slow, don't worry." He then said ABC's sales rep thanked him for talking to him and said "I will call you later. I hope business picks up for you."

Now, I can't tell you how many times a week our inside sales reps take that response as "gospel" too. Not being able to see the level of activity in the shop for themselves, often they accept the statement and move on. Here's my question:

Art, what line of questioning would you recommend in this situation to determine whether the customer is just "trying not to hurt your feelings" (while using other suppliers and trying to keep their options open for now) or is really being honest with you? We truly need to ask questions that would be appropriate to help zoom in on what's really happening. We've brainstormed a number of question scenarios, but haven't hit on anything that doesn't come off as sounding a bit adversarial in this situation.

Bob Hesse, Worldpac

Art's Reply

Bob, first, the best strategy is to prevent this from coming up.

If your reps say what ABC's rep said ("You haven't bought from us, why?") stop that immediately. As if it's the customer's obligation to buy from

them? I suggest looking at every call, even with your best customers, as having to earn a sale.

Quite often we get responses that we elicit. Analyze what your reps are saying to get "Business is slow." Be sure they're starting out with some specific value statement that leads the conversation into questioning about needs, or a particular product line.

Finally, when they do hear it, I'd ask questions that slightly question the lie, with the intention of getting a commitment for next time.

"That's interesting, other shops seem to be doing pretty steady. Why the drop off in business?"

"What are you planning on doing?"

"Let's talk about when things pick up..."

Q. Hi Art,

I was a regular of yours three years ago and switched careers for two years. I'm back into sales and recruiting and wondering if you could please advise me on a tip for the best method to reintroduce myself to my previous clients and prospects I lost contact with. I am planning to send an ezine or other such email but not sure how this would go over. Thanks.

**Orinthia Marks,
Custom Staffing Inc.**

Art's Reply

Orinthia, first, welcome back! I would simply start out by saying that you had the opportunity to work with them several years ago, remind them of how, and tell them what you're doing now (in terms of benefits to them) and tell them you'd like to ask a few questions to see if you might be able to help them again.



They're Looking for Something to Object To. Do Not Give It To Them

A sales rep called me, mispronounced my name, then without asking questions, jumped into a pitch for something or another; I can't recall. The first time he mentioned what his product could do, I latched on to it and jumped in,

"I don't need that. Not interested."

If you barge blindly into a call with a prepared presentation and no up-front questioning, keep in mind that they are likely looking for the first piece of data they can object to. Always question first.

Listen When They Lower Their Voice

You like to be in on secrets don't you? How about when someone whispers some information in your ear? You pay close attention. Likewise, be particularly aware of what prospects and customers say when they lower their voice, or whisper so as to not be heard by others in their area. Typically this is sensitive and important information.

Delay When Hit With a Surprise Negotiation

Picture this: Out of the blue like a lightning bolt arrives a phone call from a prospect or customer who wants to negotiate (lower) price or terms, or wants you to throw in something on an order.

Oh, by the way, he's also going to put you on the speakerphone since there are several others in the office. This customer was the furthest thing from your mind before the call. What do you do?

It could be dangerous to dive into the conversation at this point. He and his team are obviously well prepared for this session; you are not. The advisable route would be to delay until you can prepare—even if just for a few minutes.

"Mr. Prospect, I want to make sure I have all my facts and figures right before I proceed with you. Let me call you back in 10 minutes."



You Do Not Need To Apologize For Helping Them

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 be.

How To Leave The Door Open After a Lost Sale

Let's say you've been informed you lost a sale to a competitor. You could become indignant, rip the competition, and tell the prospect to go pound sand. Of course you wouldn't even consider that (although it might feel good). A better alternative is to keep the door open, and set the stage for the future, maybe even plant some doubts. Tell them you'd love to talk with them again at some point, and let them know you're available if anything happens. Then ask them, **"Were there any reservations at all about the selection?"**

This could point out the one or two weaknesses in the competitor—valuable info for your next contact. Also ask, **"What could you see happening that might cause you to need another vendor, perhaps as a backup?"**

Always End With a Positive Outcome

Here's a rule we've seen in some telesales departments: No one can leave the office unless their last call was a positive one. They don't necessarily have to make a sale; meeting an objective of qualifying a prospect and mailing literature is fine, if that is their goal on the call (Many have a several-call sales cycle). This ensures that everyone leaves the office on an upbeat note for the day, and results in people eager to begin calling in the morning. Needless to say, sales are a natural result of this rule.

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.

Quick, State a Closing Question

One very simple exercise I do at seminars is going around the room, and without preparation, have sales reps give me one way of asking for the sale or commitment. It is a bit surprising how some people have to hesitate (meaning they may not actually be asking) or use weak questions that don't ask for the sale or commitment at all, like, *"So this looks like a good product, doesn't it?"*

Keep in mind, a definite closing question need not or should not be pushy, but DOES ask for action. Here are examples.

"Is this what you'd like to do?"

"Sounds to me like you've already pictured yourself using this, right?"

"Any reason why we shouldn't move forward with the paperwork?"

"Based on what you've told me, this looks like exactly what you're looking for. Have you seen anything that fits your needs more closely? "Any reason to wait any longer?"

"What will we need to do from this point to get going?"

"If I'm reading you correctly, you've already decided to do it, right?"

"Normally when I hear that from someone, they've made up their mind to go with it. Is that the case?"

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