



# TELEPHONE PROSPECTING AND SELLING REPORT

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## Smile Your Way to Sales and Life Success

Right now, as you are reading this, smile. That's right, a big old, teeth-showing, squinty-eyed full face smile. Just do it!

There. I bet you feel better, even if you had to force it. That's the power of the smile.

I always joke that the first thing any new sales or customer service trainer is taught to share is that you should keep a mirror in front of you and SMILE when you are on the phone. Well, just like many other simple, basic things are made fun of, this flat out works.

There are so many benefits and positive results of smiling, on the phone or off, on the job, and in everyday life.

I've been doing research on smiling for a few months (sounds like tough, scientific work, right?) and found lots of interesting, and fun information.

### Why Smile?

First, what's the big deal? Why smile?

A smile is a win-win activity. The giver and receiver both gain.

When you catch someone's eye and smile at someone, it has an immediate uplifting effect on that person. People like to be with people who make them feel good. The smile is most often returned which makes the giver feel good as well. Just try it the next time you are walking through a store and you'll see the results.

A smile is an invitation. It signifies to the other person that you are friendly and approachable, both in business and personal situations.

A smile is comforting. A gentle smile can ease just about any tense situation.

A smile makes you more attractive and likeable. Rachel Ray said the best piece of advice she received before starting her first cooking show was "Look like you are having fun up there, because people like to watch people who are enjoying themselves." So she decided to smile all the time. Kind of worked for her, didn't it? Long ago in my speaking career, I read on an evaluation, "You have a great smile. Use it more often." I did, and do. And I noticed a difference in positive audience reaction, and the fun I was having.

Smiling makes you look and feel confident. The confident sales pro gets the business.

The more smiles you give, the more you get back.

A smile costs nothing, but like in the Master Card commercial, is priceless.

### Affects Your Attitude

Smiling changes your attitude, whether you realize it or not. If you have any doubts, next time you feel down, start smiling and thinking positive thoughts and see what happens. Smiling affects our emotions because of a brain-body connection. It triggers scientifically measurable activity in the left frontal cortex, the area of the brain where happiness is registered. And even if the smile is forced, our brains don't really know the difference between reality and pretense, so when you pretend to feel a certain way, your brain releases endorphins (happy hormones) and you'll feel better instantly.

Smiling can even help make you

thinner! According to a study in the journal, Cell Metabolism, the hormone released when you are in a good mood, serotonin, reduces your appetite and affects your body's ability to burn fat.

### More Results From Smiling

A consultant on customer service, Jeff Kober, posted online a list of the many results of smiling:

- Helps us to change our mood.
- Provides us a greater attention/notice from others around us.
- Boosts our immune system and overall health.
- Utilizes as many as 16 facial/neck muscles. But it takes 43 to frown.
- Lowers the blood pressure.
- Helps make people more successful in the long run.
- Helps us stay more positive.
- Releases endorphins that act as natural pain killers.
- Acts as a natural pain killer.
- Makes us look younger
- Helps pave the way toward a better future.
- Releases a warmer vocal tone.
- Becomes contagious with others.
- Relieves our stress.
- Triggers certain hormones, lowering heart rates, and steadying breathing.
- Helps support our immune systems and fight illness.

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# Sales Observations

**I've been handling lots of details** after my mom's death. I think she saved every statement she ever received, so lots of wading through piles of paper.

I've been consolidating and closing several of her bank accounts and had interesting transactions at two different banks. At the first one, there were several certificates of deposit and a checking account. I told the personal banker I wanted to withdraw the funds from the CD's. He said, "No problem," and came back minutes later with a cashier's check. This was not an insignificant amount, probably what this guy might make in a year. And he just hands me the check and says, anything else?" He made NO offer to keep the money at his bank! So I took it to the next bank.

At this institution, where there were also a couple of accounts with a fair amount of funds, I told the personal banker I needed to set up a temporary checking account to handle some of the estate matters. I deposited the check from the other bank, and while inputting the account data she noticed the cash in the other accounts as well, and asked a number of questions about what I planned on doing with the money, and offered to have me meet with an in-house investment advisor. I told her that would not be necessary. Undeterred, she then asked what I did for a living, found out that I owned a business, and engaged me in a conversation about my business banking, and actually asked for my

business! I declined, but she did ask if she could stay in touch, and I agreed.

I wonder which bank is doing better?

Just like in these situations, everyone has possible business there for the taking. What does that look like in your world, and what are you, or can you do to seize the opportunities?

**Perhaps you've heard that after** you ask for the business you should shut up, just remain silent. It's true. It works.

Let me add that there has been a saying floating around for years regarding this that I do NOT agree with: "The first one who talks, loses." We don't want to look at them buying as losing, do we? Of course not. But we do want them to be the first one to talk, with the answer that we are looking for.

Here's a great example shared by Jeffrey Noble, a sales pro with TigerPaw Software.

Jeffrey had been working on a prospect for a while on a fairly substantial sale. The prospect had been trying to beat him down on price a bit. Jeffrey confidently said,

**"It's \$32,000, let's just get it done."**

Then Jeffery shut up. And waited. And waited. And checked his email. And remained silent. For a FULL two minutes and 49 seconds!

To illustrate how long that is, just pause and count to 16. It was 10 times that long!

Finally, the guy said, "F—k it, let's do it."

Get more comfortable with silence on the phone. I often quote a study that states most people tend to exaggerate their perception of silence at a factor of three to 300 times what it actually is.

Keep in mind that they are simply thinking during that time. Just as they would be if you were there with them. So visualize them if that makes you feel better.

Consider the consequences if you jump in before they do. Usually it's to

talk about something that will not give you the full price sale.

So, ask for the business, then...wait. You might just get what you want.

**A local radio commercial for a** car dealership suggests that you don't get one Kia, buy two! At first, I was shocked, but then it made sense. Their point was that you could own two for the price of a more expensive luxury car.

At first, an appeal like this in today's economy might seem crazy. I think it is brilliant. This is a perfect time to be a contrarian. If you are doing the same thing as everyone else, you will likely get the same poor results as most people. By being different, maybe a bit over the top, you might see and seize opportunities others are unaware of in their reactive state. Marketing guru Dan Kennedy always says, "Observe what everyone else is doing, and do the opposite."

So how about expanding your thinking and dreaming. Analyze who you are going after right now, how you are reaching them, and what you want. Ask some "Why?" questions. Why couldn't you go after business previously thought unattainable? The same with reaching prospects you have never considered before. The possibilities are limited only by your thinking.

Go make it your best month ever!

*Art*

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# Three Words That Will Lead to Your Sales Success

By Geoff Alexander

Frustrating. Annoying. Unusable.

These words are three of the most common used by prospects to describe a product or service that isn't working well for them. And they're using these words because they're talking to you about potentially changing to your offering, and telling you why they're unhappy with what they're using now.

Many inside sales reps, though, ignore these clue words, and instead of asking the prospect to elaborate on the pain point, begin feature dumping all over the place, describing features and benefits like crazy, but failing to use the clue to begin the process of quantifying the scope and return-on-investment (ROI) value of the problem. Let's talk about how to fix this.

## What to Avoid

Here's an example of how it **shouldn't** be done. The prospect is a Testing Manager:

**Prospect:** "It takes forever to build scripts with our current regression tester, and it annoys the heck out of me and the team, because we're getting pressure to get out the new release. How soon can you get me a demo?"

**Salesperson:** "I think you'll find that our GUI is terrific, and you'll be able to build scripts faster than your current solution. I can fit you in for a demonstration webinar next Wednesday. Will that work with your schedule?"

**Prospect:** "Yes, I'll get the team together to take a look."

**Salesperson:** "Terrific. I'll send you a confirmation email, along with a dial-in keycode. Anything else I can answer before I let you go?"

The problem here is that the rep doesn't know about the problem (he or she didn't ask), and is just going to deliver another unqualified webinar. Maybe the webinar goes well, and the rep keeps calling, but after two weeks, there's still no P.O. Not only that the rep can't reach the prospect, but the rep's calls aren't being returned. Sound familiar? It should, because it's probably happened to all of us (me included, when I was a

junior salesperson).

So how do we fix this, and accelerate the sales cycle? By asking the prospect to better explain the problem, instead of jumping prematurely into delivering a demo/webinar. How about improving the call so it goes like this:

**Prospect:** "It takes forever to build scripts with our current regression tester, and it annoys the heck out of me and the team, because we're getting pressure to get out the new release. How soon can you get me a demo?"

**Salesperson:** "Tell me a little about that new release, and the internal pressures you're running into."

**Prospect:** "We have an important upgrade that will fix a lot of the problems in our last release, and included is a new feature set our customers have been asking for. We've got hundreds of customers lined up to buy this upgrade, and they won't buy additional licenses until the old problems have been fixed. Our current regression tester has blown up on several tests already, and the VP of Sales is putting pressure on engineering, because she needs the revenue this quarter."

**Salesperson:** "Do you have a sense of what kind of revenue is going to be generated when the new release is ready to ship?"

**Prospect:** "Well, it's conservatively 2000 licenses, and we're charging \$495 for the upgrade."

**Salesperson:** "That comes out to \$990,000, does that sound about right?"

**Prospect:** "Right, and the quarter ends in 60 days."

**Salesperson:** "I can see why the VP of Sales is concerned. If we divide \$990,000 by 60 days, it looks as though there's

**a lost opportunity cost of \$16,500 per day. That's a lot."**

Can you see what we're doing here?

We're now fully understanding what the ramifications are of not finding a solution. Now you can do your demo webinar.

So why hasn't the prospect called us back after the webinar?

Busy in the lab, trying again to get the old product working, broken ankle in a pickup game and he or she is out for 3 days, could be anything. But now you have the power to call above the Testing Manager, maybe to the VP of Engineering (and you did begin the sales process by calling high and getting passed down, didn't you?) You can tell the VP that you know that his or her company is losing \$16,500 a day in delayed sales, and the VP can accelerate your sale again.

## Listen for the Clues

In each telesales training course I teach, we spend a lot of time talking about clues, and how to address them. The clues commonly begin with words like "annoying," "frustrating," or "unusable." When you hear these words, or those similar to them, perk your ears up, stop "selling," and ask for elaboration. It's your key to getting important ROI information that will get you the sale faster.

This sales technique will increase sales, and help you to understand your prospect's situation more fully. Add it to your Best Practices playbook.

(Since 1990, Geoff Alexander has specialized in training sales professionals to sell b2b high technology solutions via the telephone. His client list includes companies such as Cisco Systems, HP Software, IBM Rational, and Wind River Systems. Geoff holds a Master's degree in Education, with a concentration in Instructional Technology. Visit his Inside Sales Tips blog at [www.alextrain.com/inside-sales-tele-sales-tips-blog](http://www.alextrain.com/inside-sales-tele-sales-tips-blog).)



# How to Succeed With Gatekeepers

One of the more interesting challenges in prospecting is dealing with a human screen or “gatekeeper.”

A gatekeeper is *anyone* who stands between you and your prospect. Forget the notion that gatekeepers are typically secretaries and receptionists. They can be, and very often are, supervisors, managers, project leaders and even executives. Male or female, by the way.

Why do they exist?

A major role of a gatekeeper is to protect the time of the decision maker. It is important to note that they can protect that time in a couple of ways. They can do it by quickly “screening” your call with a terse evaluation of who you are and why you are calling. Or they can be more detailed and thorough by evaluating your information and then presenting it to the decision maker. Either way, street smart sales reps understand that the role of the gatekeeper is not to screen out *all the calls*, but rather *only those calls that appear to be a waste of time*.

## Effective Strategies in Managing Gatekeepers

When you encounter a gatekeeper there are three ways to deal with it. You can:

a. Avoid it, b. Penetrate it, or, c. Work with it.

For the remainder of this article we will look at the first strategy which requires tenacity and patience but can have the biggest payoff.

### Avoid It

The first strategy is plain and simple: you avoid the gatekeeper by attempting to reach the decision maker directly. You won't have to deal with a gatekeeper if they are not there. The way you do that is to try calling at different times in the day. Wow! Bet you haven't heard that one before! While this tip may seem outdated, I find that the average rep doesn't employ it very often. We'll look at the reasons in a moment.

First, here's what you have to do. Call early or call late in the day when you expect the gatekeeper to be away from the desk. That's it. Nothing else. Nothing clever.

I was reminded of this a week or so ago in Virginia, where one of the reps *accidentally* happened to dial the West coast. It was just after 7:00 a.m. in California. Guess what? The CIO of a major firm answered the line and gave the rep a truckload of information. In less than an hour the rep made about fifteen calls and reached four major decision makers. The rep was actually stunned. He said he would have been pleased with four top decision makers in a day.

### Excuses

I hate to belabor the point—but I will. This is such an effective strategy and I often wonder why more sales reps don't use it with any degree of regularity. Well, I don't really wonder why because I have heard all the excuses before. Let's take a closer look. Do any of these apply to you?

**1. Business Hours.** Here's the number one excuse: “We don't open till 9:00.” How sad! No, how pathetic. The moment you dredge this one up is the moment you should consider a new career. If your personal and corporate revenue objectives are dependent upon you making sales, then do what you have to do. Either get in early and make your calls or do what street smart sales reps do: make them from you home. Or, another approach is to make calls into different time zones so that you can maximize your calling. For example, if you work in Baltimore (Eastern Standard Time) start calling the midwest and move out to the east coast as the morning progresses.

**2. It doesn't work.** This is a real beauty: “I-tried-it-and-it-doesn't-work!” Reps complain that they tried calling early or late in the day with no luck. Translated: “I called Mr. Big once at 7:15 and he wasn't there. See, I told you it wouldn't work!” Then they fold up like a cheap suit, content that the strategy doesn't work and

they can go back to their old routines. What's missing?

Savvy sales reps will call at 7:15 and then again at 7:25 and then 7:30 and then 7:35 and so on. Whatever. They recognize that prospects will come into the office at different times; they will get coffee, they will go to the bathroom, they'll chat for a moment or two down the hall. The point is, be persistent. Try this: take your top ten prospects. Start your dialing with the first prospect and continue on to the tenth. Then start all over again. Then again. See what happens.

**3. It's annoying.** Don't freak out. I say that because the moment I suggest this strategy in training there is inevitably someone who says “We'll annoy the prospect if we call too often.” Think about it for a moment. If they are not there, how can you annoy them? If they are there and don't answer the phone, how will you ever know that you annoyed them?

Some reps will counter that by stating “*With call display and all those other features, the decision maker can see that I have called often. She'll be upset!*” Let's be candid: do you think major decision makers sit down at their desks in the morning and scroll through their telephone features to see who has been calling their office? No. They have other things to do.

**4. Complacency.** I think the real reason why reps don't bother calling early or late is that they get a little too complacent. Or, dare I say, lazy? They fall into a routine of calling between certain hours and that's it. Getting up and coming in early means a bit of a life style change. But that's what it might take to be successful.

Try this strategy for a week or two and compare your results.

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*(continued from cover page)*

- Helps us to live longer.
- Provides a stimulation to others as strong as eating 2,000 chocolate bars.
- Becomes contagious.
- Eases the tension in an embarrassing moment.

Some people like to use prompts at their desk to help them get in that smiling mood before a call. For example,

Post pictures and images at work of people smiling and having fun.

Post pictures of your kids, family, you engaging in your favorite activity, or goofy group photos of you and your friends.

Think of a baby smiling. Or trying to make a baby smile.

Recall funny moments from your past, things that make you break out laughing. Write a few words that trigger those moments in your memory and post them on the wall.

Keep fresh blooming flowers around you.

Life Coach Devlyn Steele suggests you perform an exercise six times a day that helps you smile more, stay positive, and builds energy:

“Breathe in through your nose, let it out through your mouth and smile as you let the air out. Doesn't that feel good? The breathing is very important. Your nostrils are attached to the limbic system. The limbic system controls your emotions, and when you breathe in deep through your nose it has a calming effect on you. So breathe in and smile. And think positive thoughts as you are doing so.”

Of course, since this publication is primarily for salespeople using the phone, I urge you to increase your “smile time” when you are on calls, leaving a voice mail message, and recording your voice mail greeting. That smile will be heard, you will feel better, and your sales results will increase as well.



## **The Value of a Smile**

*By Dale Carnegie*

*A smile costs nothing, but creates much.*

*It enriches those who receive,  
without impoverishing those who give.*

*It happens in a flash and the memory of it sometimes lasts forever. None are so rich they can get along without it, and none are so poor but are richer for its benefits.*

*It creates happiness in the home, fosters good will in a business, and is the countersign of friends. It is rest to the weary, daylight to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad, and Nature's best antidote for trouble.*

*Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed, or stolen, for it is something that is no earthly good to anybody till it is given away.*

*And if in the hurly-burly bustle of today's business world, some of the people you meet should be too tired to give you a smile, may we ask you to leave one of yours?*

*For nobody needs a smile so much as those who have none left to give!*

## **A Shady Voice Mail Technique**

**Q.** Art, I know a sales trainer who advocates not giving any information at all when leaving a voice mail message because his view is that the more you say, the less chance the prospect will call you. So, for totally cold calls, this is his voice mail message:

*“John, this is (name) . As soon as you get a minute, please give me a call at \_\_\_\_\_.”*

Would you care to comment on your opinion of this message to a total stranger?

Thanks,

Harrison Greene  
Unique Selling Systems

### **Art's Reply**

**A.** Harrison, thanks for the note.

That's actually a technique I make fun of. It is unprofessional, reeks of old-school salesy-ness, and it's simply a shady technique that somewhat forces the prospect to call back, since the reasoning is that they wonder if it is someone who might be a prospect or customer for them. When someone uses it on me, and I call back to find out they are a salesperson, they better have their A-game because they get skewered.

### **Harrison's Reply**

Thanks, Art. Precisely my feelings. I wrote to the author and told him that I felt like having 50 people leave him that voice mail message.

Frankly, this is as manipulative and so full of those old fashioned "tricks" that it makes me question this guy's stuff. When I challenged him he told me that until he finds someone who can give him "empirical" evidence that they have a better way to get return calls, they had better face the reality that in this New Economy we have to do what works even though some people might be offended. He claims that only 1-2% of those who have called him back were offended. So, he is advocating this approach because it gets results.

But, all of this is good news because people like him open the door really wide for people like you and me.



# How to Break the Fear of Cold Calling

The most common sales question I hear is, "Is there any way I can break through or overcome my fear of cold calling?"

Most of us have at least some resistance to cold calling, and some people I talk with have such a paralyzing visceral and emotional fear of cold calling that they can't even consider doing it.

The fear of cold calling is a painful, daily struggle for many entrepreneurs and salespeople who have been trained in traditional selling techniques.

Traditional sales trainers answer questions about cold calling this way:

"All you have to do is make more phone calls."

"All you have to do is think more positive thoughts."

"Just learn to accept rejection as a normal part of selling."

In other words, "It's **your** fault that you aren't succeeding in sales."

This is like telling someone who's terrified of jumping off a diving board,

"Don't be a wimp! Just jump!"

In my experience, very few people are able to overcome their fears that way, because the underlying message is that, if you force yourself to do something uncomfortable, "just doing it" will magically solve the problem.

But this is a response that shows no understanding at all of the psychological barriers that underlie the fear of cold calling.

So, how do you overcome your fear of cold calling?

In my opinion, the solution actually is simple, and is based on understanding three simple concepts:

## **1. It's Not Your Fault**

We can't help thinking there's something wrong with us if other people keep telling us that something shouldn't be a problem, but our own inner feelings tell us that we aren't comfortable doing it.

There's a sort of "old boys' club"

sales-conditioning mentality prevalent in English-speaking countries, including the US, Canada, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand, that says, "I had to suffer to succeed in sales success, so you need to, too!"

This thinking comes from traditional sales programs that continue to be the accepted approach to selling.

What you need to understand, though, is that you may fear cold calling because you have probably been exposed only to traditional selling approaches, which triggers rejection.

These approaches teach us to make cold calls this way: introduce yourself, explain what you do, suggest a benefit to the potential client...and then close your eyes and pray that they won't reply with "Sorry, not interested" or "Sorry, I'm busy."

If you're still using this traditional approach, you probably hear responses like these the moment you stop talking.

They're rejections, and what they do is make you feel rejected—and that's reason enough to make you dislike, fear, and avoid cold calling.

How can cold calling be a positive experience if rejection is the most common response you get?

## **2. Are Your Self-Perceptions Passive or Aggressive?**

Whenever I chat with people about the fear of cold calling, they almost always tell me that they're afraid to make cold calls because they don't want to be perceived as "aggressive."

This is another part of the internal battle — they beat themselves up for being too passive and lacking the confidence to make the next call, but they don't want to call for fear of being seen as aggressive.

Here's the good news: there is a middle ground between "aggressive" and passive."

It's a place where you can be who you are while still being extremely effective with cold calling, without ever experiencing rejection again.

## **3. Learn to Let Your Language Match Your Thinking**

If you can center yourself into a place where you can let go of feeling that you have to go on using traditional cold calling "scripts" and behaviors, you'll find yourself spontaneously using language that you would use in a natural conversation.

Using natural words and phrases—speaking exactly the way you would with someone you know, can transform cold calling into a refreshing and productive experience.

And, as you let go of the old-school cold calling model, in which your product or service is your only way of generating a phone conversation with a prospect, you'll make the most crucial transition of all: you'll begin thinking of approaching potential prospects not from your perspective, but from theirs.

What do I mean by that?

Imagine what it would be like if you could hear your prospect's thoughts about the problems they are having — and that your solution can solve.

Even more importantly, suppose you could also make note of the words and phrases they're using as they think about their problems, and that you could take that language and embed it in your cold calling approach.

How? It's simple. Just ask your current clients what three core problems your product or service has solved for them.

When you change your thinking, you can't help changing the language that you use, which lets you connect in a whole new positive way with the other person you are calling.

If you can let go of your old-school belief system and open up to the possibility that there is a more natural, comfortable way to cold call — one that doesn't trigger rejection — you'll be surprised by how easily you'll break through and overcome your fear of cold calling.

*(Ari Galper, founder of Unlock The Game™, makes cold calling painless and simple. Learn his free cold calling secrets even the sales gurus don't know. To receive your 10 free audio mini-lessons visit <http://www.UnlockTheGame.com/Art>)* ☎

# How to NOT Use Mail Before a Call

Let's look at a call I received that highlights a few major mistakes some sales reps make by phone.

**Rep:** "Hello, I'm \_\_\_ with Computer Consultants. I'm calling because of the letter I had sent you."

**"Ok."**

**Rep:** "Well, what did you think of it?"

**"I don't know what letter you're talking about."**

**Rep:** "It was a six-page letter on network security."

**"I didn't request it, right?"**

**Rep:** "Uh, no."

"Lots of mail streams in here every day. If it's not from someone I know, or if I didn't request it, it usually goes in the can."

**Rep:** "Oh. Uh, let me resend it then."

"No."

**Rep:** (Silence.) "Well, why?"

"Because you haven't given me any reason to spend any time listening to you, or reading a letter, and certainly not a six-page one."

**Rep:** "You should read it because we're the best at what we do."

(Trying to hold back laughter, even looking around to be sure I'm not on Candid Camera.) "Look, you've given me no reason to speak with you. I'm not interested."

**Rep:** (Sarcastically, and noticeably annoyed) "Well, I don't imagine you've heard of AT&T, Sony, Xerox, and General Foods."

"Uh huh."

**Rep:** "Those are just a few of the companies we work with. We're the best."

"I've spent a couple of minutes on the phone with you, and all I know is that you say you've worked with big companies, which as a small business doesn't impress me, and that you send out unsolicited long letters, and you're becoming irritated with me, even though I have no idea what you do and how it would

have ANY affect on ME."

**Rep:** (Exasperated) "We analyze companies' network security, and exposure to risk, and provide comprehensive suggestions and solutions to ensure they minimize or eliminate any potential downtime or liability issues due to data theft, and internal computer and network failures."

**"Sorry, not interested."**

## Analysis

This is a good example of what happens when you stick a techie on the phone without adequate sales training. I hate to stereotype here, but, when you take someone who has an intimate knowledge of their product, and is passionate about it (which is great, by the way) without sales training, they are not able to understand that everyone doesn't have the same knowledge or feelings they do. And that is frustrating for them.

The fact is, if the guy would have used that very last few statement he made to me as an opening, then bridged into questions, I would have listened to him. For example,

**"Art, I'm \_\_\_ with Computer Consultants. We analyze companies' network security, and exposure to risk, and provide comprehensive suggestions and solutions to ensure they minimize or eliminate any potential costly downtime or liability issues due to data theft or internal computer and network failures. I'd simply like to ask a few questions to determine if we have a basis for a more in-depth conversation."**

I would have listened to that.

Let's look at his errors.

## Lack of Information

There's no excuse for someone selling that level of sophisticated consulting service to not get information about the prospect before speaking with him. He could have asked my marketing manager about our business, computer network, and security before taking any action. This would have allowed him to plan a more customized, on-target

approach...one that would have been interesting.

## Relying on the Mail

Are some salespeople naïve, delusional, or just plain stupid when they think they can mass mail their sales message, and assume the paper will travel further than the waste receptacle hungrily waiting just to the side of where the mail is opened? And if the written word could do an adequate job of selling, why would you be needed, anyway?

We've had plenty of articles here over the years about how to use the mail in pre-approach strategies to take the chill off a cold call, but none rely on an unsolicited mail to do all of the selling, while assuming the target will eagerly read it with interest. (That would be for another newsletter on how to run a direct response mail campaign.)

This led to the call starting off horribly. He was already in a hole...within the first 10 seconds. And I suspect it was not the first time. Tough to make a career out of that.

## "We're the Best."

Question for you: How do **you** react when a person—whom you already are suspect of or dislike—makes an egotistical, unsubstantiated claim? You view it through the filters of your emotional prejudices and biases and doubt it, resent it, and maybe even challenge it. It further validates your negative feelings. I had already characterized this guy as a goof (and as likely material for this column). He didn't let me down with his "We're the best" claim as a reason why I should listen to him.

He had not given me any indication whatsoever about what his company did, let alone how he could help me. That is all listeners care about. And it reminded me of other similar phrases that reps should avoid without having proper substantiation, such as,

"We're the biggest," "We're the leading ...", and one of my favorites, "We're the most respected ..."

If you want to use the mail to warm up your calls, fine. But don't rely on it to do the selling for you.



## Prospecting Pointers

Angie Medina with Troy XCD Inc., shared a couple of ideas on prospecting and getting to decision makers.

- To really differentiate yourself, send a crumpled up catalog or brochure in an envelope and attach a note saying,

**“Don’t throw this away again!”**

- Some organizations don’t give out the names of individuals to salespeople. However, you might try,

**“I’m sending some information and I need to know who I should send this to ...”**

## Tips from a Telesales College Attendee

Vic Wagner had some fine suggestions shared while attending a Telesales Rep College.

- Vic avoids using contractions when speaking by phone. The reasoning is that they can be more difficult to understand, particularly if the salesperson speaks rapidly.

- On getting calls returned, he recites his value statement, then says,

**“And I would appreciate the courtesy of a return call. I thank you in advance.”**

He sells to top-level individuals and says this works very well for him.

## Make It Easier to Get Through Next Time

Kammera Briner sells customer service follow-up programs to car dealers. She said that dealerships often have screeners who are very protective of decision makers. Once she speaks with a decision maker and plans on following up, she’ll sometimes say,

**“I did have some difficulty getting through to you. Could you please tell your assistant that I will be calling back?”**

## Get the Money Today

At a seminar for a state chamber of commerce several of the reps mentioned a technique they like to use to get a credit card payment instead of sending out an invoice (which might not always get paid).

**“We can make this transaction paperless right now. Let’s put it on a credit card ...”**

I like to use something similar:

**“Let’s eliminate one step in the administrative process and just put it on your credit card right now. That way we won’t have to create more paperwork for everyone later.”**

## Help Them See a Problem

Don’t simply say, “Are you having any problems now?” That forces them to think too much for you, and they’re likely not going to do that, or at least come up with anything worthwhile. Instead, in response to “I’m happy with my present supplier,” ask something like,

**“I see. When you’ve had difficulty in the past with \_\_\_\_\_, what were the specific problems?”**

You fill in the blank with something you’re pretty sure they have challenges with. For example,

**“When you’ve had difficulty in the past with compatibility, what were the specific problems?”**

## When You're the Higher-Priced Alternative...

Question to ask when they are comparing you to a discounter:

**“What other expenses have you considered in the long-term if you went with the lower-price alternative?”**

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