



TELEPHONE PROSPECTING AND SELLING REPORT

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How to Handle Early Resistance

When prospecting, even if you do everything I suggest in Smart Calling, point-by-point perfectly, and deliver what you feel is a tailored, value-packed opening statement, you will still get people who respond with some variation of "I'm not interested," or, "We're happy with what we're doing."

Expect it. Don't be deterred by it. And prepare for it.

Resistance after hearing an opening statement from an unknown caller is a natural, conditioned reaction for many people. And it usually works in attempts to blow sales reps off the phone. Except you, of course; because you'll have some conversational ways to get the prospect talking, which really is the key to keeping the call alive, and creating an opportunity.

Resistant Reflex Responses

I have a name for these kinds of inherent reactions that sales calls tend to elicit from prospects: Resistant Reflex Responses (RRR's). They simply are a natural reflex for many people; like ducking if an object is flying at your head. It's instinctive. Not much thought goes into them; they just happen.

Trying to counter them with logic is tough, since, well, what would you be arguing against? We haven't heard anything of substance yet other than the response. And you don't want to use a goofy retort that some sales books suggest: "*Well of course you aren't interested, I haven't given you anything to be interested in yet!*" Give me a break.

So what should you do? Get them talking -- which moves their mind away from their reflexive response and on to something of substance.

Use a "Pattern Interrupt"

A model of communication called Neuro Linguistic Programming that was popularized by many self-help gurus over the past 20 years (most notably Tony Robbins) espouses a theory and technique called a "pattern interrupt." Without causing your eyes to glaze over in boredom, let me simplify it for our purposes: When people do or say something automatically, it's called a pattern. If you do something that stops that pattern and gets them talking or thinking about something else, then that is a pattern interrupt. In what city were you born?

That last question was a pattern interrupt. You were reading along, and I interrupted you with a question that likely caused you to think about the answer. (Or wonder if I had gone off the deep end.) Either way, using a pattern interrupt when you hear a Resistant Reflex Response, causes someone to answer a question. For example,

Prospect: "I'm not interested."

Sales rep: "I see. Where are you now getting your compressors?"

Here's another:

Prospect: "We're all set."

Sales rep: "I understand. When is your next project coming up?"

One more:

Prospect: "We wouldn't need that."

Sales rep: "Oh. How are you now handling written-off receivables?"

This is not difficult to execute. You simply need to anticipate the RRRs you are likely to hear, or if you have placed

calls for more than a day, you already know which ones you hear. Then you prepare your response.

Your tone plays a vital role in determining the success of your reply. Use a soft, almost surprised-maybe even disappointed--tone of voice. By no means do you want to seem confrontational. We want them to open up and drop their shield -- not feel threatened.

You might think that you're likely to hear something like, "Look, what part of I'm not interested do you not understand?" after your response; and you would be right. This certainly won't work every time; nothing does. However, you may at least be able to salvage some opportunities that you would not have gotten otherwise; possible sales you can cash in on either now or in the future. Your return on your miniscule time investment is huge, and you have nothing to lose.

The Softening Statement

You might have noticed that before asking the question in each of the examples above, I used a few words such as "Oh," "I see," and "I understand" to diffuse tension and soften the question. I suggest you do the same. Fellow sales trainer and founder of the prospecting system "Unlock the Game™" Ari Galper suggests a great softening statement: "**That's not a problem.**" Then he recommends diffusing the tension with something like, "**I'm not trying to replace your current vendor. Would you be open to some different ideas that you might not be using now?**"

Encountering early resistance is a natural part of prospecting. Understanding it is not a real objection, and being prepared to respond will result in more opportunities for you.



Sales Observations

I'm really worn out from hearing,

"People are busy. They don't have time for phone calls."

"No one returns calls."

"The only way I can reach prospects is through email."

Here is what I really hear when someone says those things: "I'm not saying anything with enough value on calls, and it's safer to send emails than put myself in a position where I have to talk to people and possibly encounter resistance."

I work with lots of companies and see extraordinarily successful sales reps. Know what they do? They avoid excuses, they put time into the art and science of selling, and they practice. And they understand that the most effective way to sell is through two-way, live communication

If you're faced with the resistance of "We can get it cheaper online," a good strategy is to not get into a price discussion, but rather get them thinking and talking about what they really want, which many times is not included when purchasing online. For example, "Of course most things today can be simply purchased online for lower prices. But let's look at everything that you really want..."

TELEPHONE PROSPECTING AND SELLING REPORT

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At a recent training workshop

for a client, we were discussing how to handle the early "What does it cost?" question. I'll not get specific with this client's industry since it is a very competitive one, but their service results in a very tangible return on investment over time, and they have several tiers of service that customers can invest in. I suggested replying to the question with, "Well, it really depends on how much you want to make. Let's talk about..." This should get their mind off of cost, and on to the value they will receive.

It is widely believed that we will

not accomplish something until we can actually see ourselves in our mind's eye going there. Therefore, we want our prospects and customers to see themselves taking the next action. Here's a very simple, yet powerful question I've used several times with great success over the past month: "When do you see yourself doing the training?" In all cases it helped the prospect give a clear indication of where they were in the buying process. Some were ready to move, and a couple were not and it helped me to disqualify them.

Want a good source of leads?

Listen for these words from existing prospects and customers, "At the last company I was at..." Then just ask them where that was, and probe further who might now be in that position.

On a recent cross-country flight

I was stuck next to a guy who obviously had a bad cold. He cleared his throat, loudly, every 45 seconds. (I timed him). It was not my most pleasant air experience. Coincidentally, while reading Men's Health magazine the next day, I saw an article about how to protect your voice, which of course drew my attention. One of the tips was on how to clear your throat, the right way.

The tip stated that if you clear your throat noisily, it brings your vocal folds together, which can harm them. Dr. Richard Stasney, the director of the Texas Voice Center suggested an alternative method: Take a deep breath and exhale through your mouth quickly and forcefully. This dislodges the mucus from your throat

Here's a challenge/experiment

for you this month: every day, make a commitment to ask for a decision from one more person. New prospects, or those in your follow-up files. I know you will get results.

Smart Calling Online

If you have not yet been taking advantage of your new Smart Calling Online membership site, please do... you are missing a lot! It's the most comprehensive collection of inside sales and telephone prospecting training resources available anywhere.

If you are reading this and not yet a member, to see everything that is available to you at the site, go to www.SmartCallingOnline.com.

Here's to your best month ever!

Art

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Why Asking for Their Time is a Bad Idea

By Geoff Alexander

I'm not a believer in asking permission when calling people. In our inside sales training classes, I train people to avoid beginning the call with "is this a good (or bad) time to talk." It's never a good time to talk if you have nothing to say. It's a great time to talk if you do. That's why you have to have a clear call objective (e.g. 'I'm going to fully qualify --- or disqualify' --- this prospect) before the call ends.

Many reps have been trained (but not by us) to begin calls by asking if it's a good time to talk, and justify it by saying "I want to respect their time." Much of the time, the prospect responds that he or she is busy, so a callback is scheduled, and of course, when the call is rescheduled for a later date, the prospect isn't there. So let's look at the concept of "respecting their time."

You've Already Interrupted

When I'm called, I'm always interrupted. I'm a busy guy. What I want the rep to do is quickly tell me why he or she is calling, so I can find out if it's something that interests me. So just go ahead and get it out, quickly. I'm in my office, I've been interrupted, so if you'll just go ahead and get it out (in ten seconds or fewer), you'll respect my time a whole lot more if you don't ask permission or even worse, ask me how my day is going.

I believe in calling high. 100% of the executives to whom you speak will be just as busy as I am. One theory I teach is you've got 5 seconds to get to your point, then, if the exec is interested, you've got another 30 seconds or so to be compelling enough for the exec to want to continue the conversation. So here are 4 rules for keeping your conversation moving forward from the start of the call:

1) Don't make it easy for the prospect to drop your call by inviting him or her out of it. It's hard enough to find your prospect at the phone, and taking your call.

2) Have a firm call objective. and begin your call by telling the prospect who you are, why you're calling, and what you want. All prospects are busy.

3) Don't be overly deferential. If the prospect has to terminate the call or is having a rotten day, let the prospect take the lead, and don't invite it.

4) If you do have to prematurely terminate the call, end it by asking if there's some real interest there. If there isn't, you probably don't have a real good reason to call back, and the prospect won't have a real reason to talk to you again.

I've coached inside sales reps on literally thousands of calls, and the best of them have solid objectives, and manage to fully qualify or disqualify a prospect on the first call. The reps that struggle the most are those that have fuzzy call objectives and leave a call prematurely without determining if the prospect has an interest in the solution the rep is representing.

So have a "take charge" attitude, act like a peer of your prospect, and ensure there's some interest before you determine what your next step will be. And apply those 4 rules for keeping the call moving forward 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-telesales-tips-blog.)



Three Great Questions

By Jim Meisenheimer

Some questions are so powerful they can give you virtually everything you need to help the customer buy. Here are just three out of my favorite 12 questions.

□ "What are your priorities?" It doesn't get easier than this question. Here's what you'll learn. Some people don't have priorities and this question makes those people easy to spot. If they do have them, they'll describe them in detail. If you get a long list, ask them to prioritize that for you. If the list is small, ask if there are any additional priorities. This is an assumption-buster question. If you don't ask it, you are probably making too many assumptions regarding your potential customers.

□ "What's your criteria for making a decision?" I'm absolutely amazed at how infrequently this question is asked, especially since it's one of the most powerful questions in the lineup. You'll discover if your customer even has criteria. If he does, he'll tell you what they are. Once he describes the criteria, you can ask him to prioritize them for you. When he answers this questions he is telling you what he is going to specifically base his decision on. Ask one hundred different people and you'll hear one hundred different answers. How could you begin to make an intelligent sales presentation without knowing what his decision is going to be based on?

□ "Describe your decision making process." The criteria and process are related, yet different. You need to know what criteria will be evaluated before the decision is made. You also want to know the process involved in making a decision. What steps will he actually go through to reach a final decision. You'll learn whether it will be a toss of the coin or a more complicated process. Either way, you'll be better positioned to tailor your presentation to accommodate his criteria and the process he'll use to make a decision.

(Jim Meisenheimer, CSP, is a sales and management expert. Order his book containing his 12 Best Questions at 800-266-1268, or e-mail: jim@meisenheimer.com Web site: www.meisenheimer.com)



Avoid the Five Worst Prospecting Questions Ever

While the foundation of professional prospecting is questioning, the truth of the matter is that there are some questions that telephone users should utterly avoid. They annoy your prospects and they can threaten the success of your call. Here are the five most maddening questions of all time. Purge them from your calling process.

Worst Question 1: How are you today?

Nothing, absolutely nothing, puts a prospect on the defensive faster than this question!

While YOU might think it's a real rapport builder the vast majority of your prospects think just the opposite. When surveyed well over 90% of prospects felt that the question is trite and insincere. They found it 'wastes time' but perhaps more significantly, it puts them on their guard because it creates a stereotypical (and negative) image of an invasive "telemarketer" who is trying to sell them something.

Look, the bottom line is this: you don't really care how the prospect is, do you? You want a sale, lead or an appointment. And they KNOW that. They know you don't care. They know it's a filler question.

So why would you use it? It buys you absolutely nothing and it may cost you a lot. It may tarnish your 'professional' image.

Worst Question 2: Did I catch you at a good time?

While asking a prospect 'is now is a good time' is polite and considerate, what it really does is provide a ready-made excuse to terminate the call. Picture the scene: how many times have you asked that question and the prospect says, 'Ya, sure...It's a great time! I wasn't doing anything important. In fact, I was just sitting here with my feet on the desk hoping that a sales rep would give me a call and pitch me.'

Rarely happens, right?

Of course, some prospects do say yes but the majority don't. At the moment they say 'no' you flounder and stumble around a bit and murmur something about calling later or 'when is a good time.'

If the prospect does give you a time, they are never there when you make your follow up call. Waste of everyone's time and energy.

I am all for polite and courteous teleprospecting. But instead of putting your call in the chopping block, try this, "_____, **If I have caught you at a good time what I would like to do is ask you a few questions, get a feel for you situation and see if there might be a way ...(insert your benefit).**' Positioned this way, the client gets a feel or a sense that you have been polite about the 'time' thing but you are not really asking about the time; you're asking about questions. If you move seamlessly into your first question, your client will likely answer.

Worst Question 3: What do you like about your current supplier?

What a ridiculous question! In effect, here's what you are saying to the prospect, "Tell me all the great things about your current vendor so that you will convince yourself not to make a change. Remind yourself why you made this brilliant choice in the first place so that you can pat yourself on the back."

This question does nothing to help your selling cause. It builds your competitor up and because the prospect is articulating their merits it'll be awfully hard to knock them down.

Instead, ask the prospect what they like to see in a vendor. Let the prospect tell you about the ideal service they would like to get. See how you compare. Don't even bother with the current competitor. Who cares? It's not what they do, it's what YOU do.

Worst Question 4: Is there anything you don't like about your current vendor?

Think about this one for a moment. The prospect doesn't know you, and out of the blue you are asking him/her to divulge the faults and flaws of your competitor. How often do you think that's going to work? It's not.

Sure, if you get lucky you might find

a flawed vendor and an annoyed prospect. But in the vast majority of the calls you make, this question will get you a blunt "no." Like Maddening Question 3, the prospect is reminded that there's nothing wrong with their current supplier or, at best, better the devil they know than the devil they don't. Net result? Resistance to change.

Instead, determine what elements are the most important (price, delivery, selection, terms etc.) Create a general question like, "**Are you getting all those elements all the time?**" Ask if they've ever been caught short? Ask what they do if there's a delay or if a product is unavailable? Ask if they have a backup plan?

These questions can open doors, not close them.

Worst Question 5: What do I have to do to earn your business?

This maddening question has been around for decades and has been driving your prospect nuts for just as long. In their mind what you are really saying is this, "Make this easy for me because I don't really want to work at it. Tell me what you want so I don't have to probe and find out."

Prospects resent this. It's lazy. And those that give you an answer often give you ridiculous answers like, "I want free shipping on every order over ten bucks...and oh...I want 120 days... oh... forget the days, how about consignment?"

Look, if you don't know how to probe for needs, start learning now!

Summary

Questions can work for you or against you. Think about your questions before you ask!



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Keep Things Simple to Sell More

Crazy-busy prospects can't handle complexity. They hate it when things are difficult to decode, decide or decipher. It grinds them to a screeching halt – which is the normal human reaction to being overwhelmed and stressed out.

Because of the chaotic business environments we work in, simplicity has recently emerged as a key factor in sales success.

As a seller, your job is to make things easier and minimize the effort for your frazzled prospects. This is especially true when you're dealing with people who seldom make decisions like the one you're proposing.

Here are some strategies you can use to make things easier for your frazzled prospects.

Augment, Don't Replace

Your prospects already use something or someone to address their needs. You can make it a whole lot easier for them to get buy-in for your product or service by positioning it as an "add on" to an existing program, process, or technology.

For example, when I talk to VPs of Sales, I always stress that my workshops on selling to crazy-busy buyers or cracking into new accounts compliment their existing sales training initiatives. I even assure them that I'll tie my strategies in with their current methodology.

By coexisting with the status quo, you can get your foot in the door without encountering a major battle. Once you're in, you can work to expand your relationship and win additional business.

Sometimes your "competitors" are internal staff whose number one concern is job loss. I knew this was going to be a major obstacle recently when I proposed a new idea to a prospect. So I dealt with it head on.

First I showed them how we could bring much-needed services to an underserved customer demographic. They loved it. Then, I talked about leveraging outside resources to "jump-start" the new program. And, I clearly stated that the ultimate goal was to turn it over to their IT as soon as possible.

Not only did I avoid an insurrection, but I quickly got their support because it provided them with more job security. Augmentation is good. It simplifies and speeds up the decision process.

Think and Act Small

If your prospects like what you've proposed, they'll want to get it approved as soon as possible. However, big ideas with big budgets are riskier and require more buy-in.

As a result, they're harder to get through the system. When you start losing momentum, your whole proposal is at risk.

So even if you have a big idea, be realistic with your prospects. Talk about starting small. Show them how you can get started, demonstrate your success, and build from there. For example, you could:

- Propose an initial assessment to understand the scope of the problem.
- Tackle a small problem where you could demonstrate immediate short-term results.
- Focus on bringing in just one of your products, services, or solutions.
- Suggest a change in only one of the departments or a single facility.

IT seller P. V. Bhaskar frequently proposes pilot projects to his clients. With a 90 percent conversion rate, they've become his secret weapon to simplify the decision-making process.

Prior to getting started, he allows the CIO and CFO to set the success parameters. As he says, "When a pilot exceeds the incumbent's performance, all I need to do is demonstrate that the success can be scaled to an actual project as well."

Going for the whole shebang at once makes things more difficult. And when you're working with frazzled customers, that's a setup for having your opportunity get derailed, delayed or dismissed forever.

But once you get your foot in the door, the hardest part is over. If you do a good job on your initial piece of business, it will be logical for your prospect to move

to the next stage with your company. Your next proposal simply augments what they're already doing.

Root Out All Complexity

In many cases, your prospects don't know what to look for or how to decide. If things get complicated, they'll quit and you'll be gonzo.

That's why it's imperative for you and your company to ask these questions all the time:

- At which point do our prospects tip into overwhelm?
- What are the complexities that grind decisions to a halt?
- How can we reduce the effort needed to make a decision?
- In what ways can we minimize decision-making risk?

Discuss these questions with your colleagues. Observe what happens in conversations with your prospects. Talk to your existing customers to get their feedback.

Then eliminate as much complexity as is humanly possible.

If you don't, it can easily become a major showstopper – which is not a desirable outcome. When you embrace the first SNAP Rule: Keep it Simple, you'll win more business with a whole lot less effort.



(Jill Konrath, is author of Selling to Big Companies, and the new best seller,

SNAP Selling. She helps sellers crack into accounts, speed up their sales cycle and win more business. To get your free Sales Call Planning Guide, visit www.SellingToBigCompanies.com or send an email to jill@sellingtobigcompanies.com.)



What to Say After they Answer a Question

By Ron LaVine, MBA

Have you ever begun to think to yourself while you are on the phone speaking with a prospect, "What am I going to say next?"

Try this approach. Base your next question upon their answer. First, listening to what someone is saying (especially a prospect) is the polite thing to do. Secondly, this strategy will enable you to keep your mind focused upon what the other person is saying rather than trying to think ahead as to what you are going to say next.

The idea is to have a conversation like you would when you are speaking with a friend. In fact, friendship and rapport are what you are trying to achieve.

Example

Prospect: "We love our database management system."

Sales Rep: "What do you like about it?" (Said with genuine interest)

Prospect: "It has quick access time to our data."

Sales Rep: "I'd like to see if I can help you. How does the access time to your data compare to the accuracy of the data being requested and received?"

In the example, "We love our database management system" provides the basis for the next question "What do you like about it?" "It has quick access time to our data" provides the basis for the next question "How does the access time to your data compare to the accuracy of the data being requested and received?"

Have you ever given a friend advice on a specific product or service that they plan to buy? What happened? Did you try to force your friend to buy it? Probably not. Why?

People do not want to be forced into what to buy and spewing forth a bunch of features hoping something you say will stick is not selling. In other words, people do not like to be sold they like to buy. Our job is to listen and find out what people want and value so we can help them buy the way they want to buy.

Determine How they Want to Buy

I will never forget an experience in class once when I was trying to coach someone who would not read my notes or listen to the prospect. The person on the other end said, "This is how we buy. You send me three packets of information and I will meet with my two managers to determine when and if we should meet."

What did the rep proceed to do? "Why don't I drop by and deliver it to you personally?" This rep was determined to get what he wanted which was a face-to-face appointment. Mr. Prospect replied, "Maybe you didn't hear me. Send over three packages of information for review first and then we can set up a meeting."

Again, the rep repeated, "I'll be in the area on Monday, why don't I drop by and give you the packets?" By this time, you can picture the steam coming out of the prospect's ears over the phone. He said, "Either you send me the three packages of information for my managers and I to review or we don't do business".

At this point, it began to sink in. This is how Mr. Prospect buys. After we hung up, I asked him why you kept asking to stop by. His response was I wanted to meet him and hand the information to him personally. Apparently, he was not listening to what was

being said. Instead, he was concentrating on his agenda, which was to get an appointment at any cost. Well it may have cost him the sale.

Do you remember when you had a great buying experience? I will bet you dollars to donuts that you raved about it to your friends. You probably talked about what you really enjoyed most when using that product or service or what you liked about the person who helped you buy it and then recommend your friends go see this person when they needed the products she offered.

Think for a moment or two on how you go about buying things. How do you want people to treat you? What qualities do you like in a salesperson and which qualities aggravate you?

What is the experience you think of, when you enjoyed buying a specific product or service? Remember that people do not like to be sold, they like to buy. Again, our job is to listen and find out what people want and value so we can help them buy the way they want to buy which may not necessarily be the way we want to sell.

A great salesperson's job is to deliver great sales experiences by asking questions, listening and creating a two-way conversation, not a one-way monologue.



Ron LaVine, MBA is president and founder of Accelerated Sales Training, Inc., a cold call training firm located in Oak Park, CA. If

you would like information on How to Make Successful Cold Calls - LIVE Call Training please call Ron at 818-519-3852 or visit www.ast-incorp.com. © 2011 by Accelerated Sales Training, Inc.

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It's Baseball Season, But You're Not Calling to Just Touch Base

Donald Holbrook with Stanford Keene posed the following question.

"I manage three guys that are on the phone everyday and talking to the top executives in companies worldwide. I am continuously working on my verbal communication as well as theirs. As you can imagine, we have to "follow up" with our contacts and have found that it is common for these guys to say that they are calling back to "touch base" or "when is a good time for me to get back in contact to touch base and see how things have progressed?" What suggestions would you have to replace these words? To me, "touch base" is a game that you may have played when you were younger on the playground at recess and they may be losing their prospect's attention when the prospect realizes that they are just touching base."

Recommendation

I always say the success of the follow up is in direct relation to the success of the previous call, and what is to happen next. It involves getting a commitment that they (the prospect) will do something and you'll do something as a result of the call. Then you can follow up with

"I'm calling to continue our conversation of last week where we had discussed ____ and you were going to review the statistics I sent you. I'd like to go through those with you and I have some additional information I believe you'll find beneficial."

On your follow-up calls it's important to remember that your prospects are likely not doing pre-call planning like you. Therefore, you can't assume they are in the same frame of mind as you when your call arrives. Actually, you should assume they might not even remember you. Then you'll make it a point to briefly review where you left the previous conversation:

"The last time we spoke you had shown interest in ..."

"I'm calling to continue our conversation from last week where we had discussed ____ and you were going to ..."



Find Power Point Presentations to Get Prospect Information

By Sam Richter

For those of you who have attended one of my presentations, you know one of my favorite quotes is: "I'm a HUGE fan of having other people do the work for you!" What do I mean by that?

Whether it's researching a company, researching an industry, or even researching a person, it's highly likely that someone has posted a blog article or written a report about your subject. What's more, you can sometimes even find "inside expert information" if you know where and how to look.

Many people don't know this, but there are literally millions of PowerPoint documents that people have posted online, related to just about any topic imaginable. Some of these presentations are from industry conferences. Others from a company's internal sales presentation library. For many, the presentation's author thought what they were posting online was private, but in reality if you know where and how to look, you can find these presentations and easily download them.

A great tool for finding PowerPoint presentations and slides is Slidefinder (www.slidefinder.net). In the main search form, enter in an industry name (e.g., medical device), a company name (e.g., Coca-Cola), or even a person's name (e.g., Bill Gates) and SlideFinder will display PowerPoint slides that are posted online that feature your specific terms.

Hover your mouse over the particular slide to see greater detail. Click the upside-down arrow under the slide page to download the entire presentation. This is a great way to get industry statistics, familiarize yourself with a topic, and get the inside information on a company. And best of all, someone else has done the heavy lifting!

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Bonus Content: Free Download of the Month

The Facebook Marketing Guide (<http://bit.ly/fX1O9q>)

This 26 page guide will help you understand how to best take advantage of Facebook as a marketing resource. If you're promoting a business, product, band or some other public figure, you have probably been advised at some point or other to "get a Facebook presence. This free guide will show you how.

(Sam Richter is the founder of the #1 rated Know More! sales training program (www.samrichter.com)). This

is just one of the more than 80 people, company, and industry information search tips and resources you'll find in his top-selling and award-winning book, Take the Cold



Out of Cold Calling (www.TakeTheCold.com).



We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit.
-Aristotle

Uncover the Competitive Price

Finding out what your competitor charges, and what your prospect/customer pays or is quoted is valuable information in a negotiation. Here are techniques from Gerald Nierenberg on finding out that information.

Guess. “OK, you’re paying \$1.45 per unit now. Oh? You say you’re paying \$1.43?”

Reversal. “Alright, suggest a fair price to me, tell me why it’s fair, and I’ll see if I can meet it.”

Comparison. “You have to consider other things besides price—delivery, dependability, quality. What’s the best package they could offer?”

Umbrella. “The market’s been volatile lately, and everyone seems to be shifting their prices. What’s the best offer you’ve received?”

Direct. “The industry average is probably \$1.45. but I’m interested in what Pat Smith at XYZ is offering I’m sure I can get close to his price.”

(“Negotiating the Big Sale,” Gerald Nierenberg)

Ask Want-Related Questions

After you’ve generated interest with your opening, asked your basic questions, and built rapport, then you get into the real meat ... the reasons they buy. Their wants. Use questions such as,

“What, ideally, do you want the end result to be?”

“How would you measure satisfaction after you’ve used it?”

“If you could design the ideal product, what would it include?”

“If budget were not a concern, what would you get?”

Q&A: How to Let Them Out of a Lie

Q. Art, I sell software support services. The only way to receive updates is through an active support agreement. Many times when I am prospecting, clients will state that they are self maintainers and receive the updates from the web. This is simply not true and impossible to do. How can I question the customer on this without implying that they are lying?” *Jayne Goodall*

Art’s Reply: I’d say, **“Oh, you might be thinking of someone else you have support with. You see, ours is only available through an active support agreement with us, and it’s not available on the web. Please tell me ...”**

Then I’d go into more questions. Regardless of whether or not they are lying, this allows them to save face (if they are) then moves quickly to questioning about their situation.

Try These Trial Closes

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

Write Out Your Opening Statement

If you use a different approach on every call you place, and/or if every call has a different objective, be sure to write out your opening statement before you deliver it. This way you are assured you know exactly what you are going to say and are able to deliver it confidently and smoothly. More importantly, you are able to examine it for content and impact. After reading over the opener, put yourself in your prospect’s position and ask yourself if **you** would be interested in that message.

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