Art Sobczak's

SMART CALLING REPORT

March 2019 Volume 36 Number 3

Responding to "I already work with someone." AND Online Advice On It to Avoid

It's my job—my passion, actually—to consume whatever I can find on sales tips, strategies, advice, training, etc., distill it down, tweak it, test it, and share it in a variety of ways, including this publication, like I've been doing for over 30 years.

Back in the day, that mostly consisted of going through books, audios, and workshops by established sales experts. Along with articles published in actual business magazines and trade publications by experts and people in the field who were showing results. Those were words printed on real paper with ink.

Today, of course *EVERYONE* publishes their advice and thoughts. That's what social media is. And a lot of it is not good. In fact, some of it is detrimental if it is used.

Sure, you can find some real gold out there. But there's a lot of silt, too.

This month I'm taking a situation that I've covered a lot over the years, and show how it was handled in a recent LinkedIn discussion.

I'll break these down as if I were coaching a rep live, or a call recording.

The Objection

The question on LinkedIn was,

How do you overcome "I already work with someone?"

One popular response was,

"I am so happy to hear that! Does that person solve all of your business challenges? If not, I can share a quick story where I doubled a company's revenue in under 2 years and could do the same for you. Can I come by tomorrow to discuss?"

Responders were gushing over that one with reactions like,

"Wow, that is great!"

"Amazing!"

The real problem with lots of these online discussions is you have people in many cases sharing suggestions they actually do not use in the real world, and others who probably would be afraid to use them, but are wowed by them, who believe that is a good thing to say.

I always analyze things both from a salesperson, and buyer perspective.

If I heard that response, I would think the person was a jerk. You can "do the same for me?" You don't know that, and we have not established that.

(However, a question at the beginning *is good*—although not that one—as I'll point out later.)

"Other than that..."

Here's another:

"Of course! I already knew that before I called you. Let me ask you, other than you working with someone else, is there any other reason you wouldn't give me a few minutes of your time?"

Again, from the comments, minds were blown in amazement. Seriously? My response to this would be,

"Nope. That's it. See ya."

If I had to pick out a positive, the acknowledgment that we expected them to already be working with someone is good… as I will address in a bit.

Another:

"I perfectly understand that you are working with someone. What I would like to suggest that we have a quick call so that way you have a better idea of what we do if anything changes."

That is all about… who?

The salesperson!

I don't care what YOU would like to do, and I do not care at this point what you do.

There were a number of others that were pretty much copied out of old sales books and/or recommended by people who had "sales trainer" in their description, which based on their responses indicates they probably haven't sold much themselves. For example,

"So I can better understand, if you could change one thing about their product or service what would it be?"

Please… they might as well suggest the *"If you could wave a magic wand"* technique.

What Should Be Said

OK, now that I've trashed a bunch of these, what should be said?

Let me qualify this with, I don't claim to have all the answers, or the only answer.

And, there are many things that can work occasionally, by a certain individual at the perfect time. But most people in general would go down in flames if they tried them.

My suggestions are based on years and years of experience… selling, coaching, teaching, researching, writing, testing, observing, being kicked in the teeth, and more.

(Continued on Page 3)

Sales Observations

I had a contractor come out to do an estimate. The woman asked great questions, took notes, made some recommendations on things I had not thought about, wrote up the estimate on the spot, and just handed the clipboard to me with a pen and said,

"**You want to go with this, right?**"

It was that simple.

No hesitation in her voice.

An assumptive, but not pushy attitude and tone.

She knew I needed the work done, otherwise I would not have called and took the time to have an estimate done. The easy thing was to just go with the estimate.

It doesn't get much more fundamental than this, and it's something we all should follow. When someone contacts you for a quote or for information, they have a reason for doing so.

I see too many organizations spend heavily on generating inquiries, and then sales reps don't treat them with urgency, and like the precious gems they are.

Lots of studies show that they will ultimately do something with someone, it might as well be you.

So, have a similar assumptive attitude, and be sure you ask--not wish--for the sale.

SMART CALLING REPORT
(ISSN 0882-1461) is published 12 times per year by Business By Phone Inc.To join, go to www.SmartCallingReport.com. Send correspondence, and change of address to **SMART CALLING REPORT**, 14005 E. Cholla, Scottsdale, AZ, 85259. Publisher/ Editor: Art Sobczak; Contributing Columnist: Jim Domanski. Subscriptions:

When you are using email prior to your Smart Call, of course we want to use the same process, mentioning the intel or connection we have. A good tip to show your credibility is to actually include the link you are referencing. For example, "Congrats on the Best In Category award you received last week (YourCityBusinessJournal.com/link)."

Here is some great sales intelligence for you. A *Wall Street Journal* article suggested that you pay attention to those automated "Out of Office" replies you get in response to emails.

In the responses the person often provides names of others you could contact in their absence. These names could be other decision makers.

If you're prospecting it could give you contacts who either could influence or make a decision.

The article cited another example where the out-of-office note said the human resources manager at a hospital had left the company. The sales rep then contacted her successor, whose contact information was in the note.

I've had this same question several times in seminars and just received it in an email:

"Art, Is it ok or not to tell potential customers that I am doing business with their competitors? I am in a technical sales field selling electric motors and gear boxes."

My answer is, there are two ways to go with this. In some industries, it can be beneficial, since it adds credibility.

In others, some companies want no part of you if you are working with their competitors because they are afraid you will share trade secrets.

It depends on what is being sold as well. If the nature of your business is where you get intimate with the customer and its methods, they might want you to themselves.

I guess the real answer is, analyze your situation, understand the implications, try it and see what happens.

Add this phrase to the list of meaningless things people say and probably do not realize they say it (I realized I do it too, but I'm working on eliminating it): Starting a thought with "I was going to say…" Huh? You were **going** to say? You just said it. When were you **going** to say it? Why didn't you? How about just **saying** it.

Here's a good technique I heard for getting someone to volunteer if there are others involved in a decision.

After you qualify someone, and they tell you they're the decision maker, say,

"It's nice to work with someone who can make a decision on their own, without having to go to a committee."

If they're not the decision maker, to save face they'll tell you they want to run it by their crew, manager, etc. That tells you there's more than one decision maker.

Now go and make this your best month ever!

Art

Art Sobczak is President of Business By Phone, and editor/publisher of SCR, and author of several books and audio training programs. He develops and delivers results-getting prospecting and sales training and workshops. To discuss what he might be able to do for you, call him at 800-326-7721, or (480)699-0958. Email him at ArtS@BusinessByPhone.com.

(Continued from Cover Page)

What I suggest is always under the umbrella of "What will minimize that chance for resistance for most people, and maximize the chance for success, based on basic human behavior principles?"

So, based on that, I've always taught that the best way to respond to this is to first understand **why** they might possibly say it.

Two Reasons

1. It's a Resistant Reflex Response, meaning there is no substance there and they are just trying to get you off the phone. Or,

2. They are working with someone (without whatever degree of happiness doesn't matter) and the easiest thing to say at that moment is they are happy, because even considering changing the status quo would involve more work than getting you off the phone.

Working within those parameters, the best first response is to get them talking. Only **then** do we have something we can work with.

Caution: There are TWO thngs you do NOT want to do at this point:

-We don't want to **argue** with them, or,

-**pitch** how good we are, or what we want to do.

Plus, if they are really satisfied with who they are with, the only way they will even enter a thought process to consider changing is if they begin to think there just might be greener grass on the other side of the fence.

For the first words out of your mouth I suggest a softening statement,

"Not a problem."

"I hear that a lot."

"That's OK."

"Almost everyone I talk to is already working with someone."

The softening is important because it is not what is expected, IF they think you are a typical salesperson.

It puts them at ease in a way.

Then comes the question. It can take different forms. A good one is to create questions based on problems they likely still have that competitors don't address as well as you. For example,

"What do you do in situations where you need same-day delivery on an essential part that is holding up your line?"

"How are you dealing with the issue of_____?"

The "Backup Plan"

Then there is the "backup plan" question that I have used successfully:

"What is your Plan B in case of an emergency?"

"When stuff hits the fan, what is your contingency?"

These questions can cause someone to think and say, "What do you mean?"

Precisely. We want them thinking about something that they hadn't before.

Ask What They Did Previously

Here's another. This is based on the proven premise that it is easier for someone to tell you what they have done before, than what they want.

"What criteria did you use when you selected them?"

"How did they happen to become your main source?"

And here is another way to possibly plant some doubt:

"When do you do your annual review to be sure you are getting the best competitive market price?"

Finally, although this would not be your initial response, but as I have taught for years, at the very minimum you can ask to keep the door open for the future, **after** you have had a brief conversation, and it doesn't appear you'll be moving forward any time soon.

"Well, if anything ever happened with them, and you were in a bind, would you consider us as a backup if you needed one?"

Good Points from the Discussion

OK, back to the original LinkedIn discussion.

There were some good suggestions in the comments that I would approve, that go along with my principles, and would recommend:

"Hey, I totally get it ... I got into this profession to challenge the status quo and help you improve your business. Are you confident enough in your current provider to get a competitive look at the solution?"

"If we were able to give you the same, great quality product/service, if not better, and at a lower price, would you be interested in speaking with us at a later date?" Note: the "later date" is the key here, since it does not ask for the commitment today. If they say yes, then it opens up the dialogue.

"Many of the strongest and longest client relationships I have started with that exact same sentence."

"I appreciate you sharing that with me, XYZ are a very good company to work with. Would you be open to looking at something else that could make your life easier?" This is very simple, and asking someone "if they are open to looking" is an easy question to answer.

In summary, just because you read it on the Internet does not make it true. In fact, in many cases it is not. Read a lot, for sure. But scrutinize your sources. And you always know you will get good advice here.

☎

Finding Needs Is Not Enough. Ask "Analysis Questions"

Every sales training session tells you to identify needs, right? You would think that is enough; find some needs, tell them what you can do, and they will buy. You've got the sale, right? NOT!

Some needs are more urgent and important than others. Consequently, some needs get acted upon and others are placed on the back burner. Sales is like that. (So is life, for that matter). And here is why so many reps feel frustration: they identify a need—heck, the customer even acknowledges it—but nothing becomes of it. No sale.

The real trick to making a solid sale is to determine the "depth" and the "weight" of a need. That's why we have **"Analysis"** questions. As the name implies, analysis questions are designed to get the client to explore and analyze their particular needs. By asking the right type of questions, the sales rep can get the customer to not only articulate the need, but also to prioritize it. Once that is done, selling becomes so much simpler. Here's an example of analysis questions to help clients explore the concern.

Sales Rep: "Mr Leon, you mentioned that you have always had a summer school program. You stated that some were good and some were . . . well . . not so good. Is that correct?"

Customer: "Yes"

Sales Rep: "Describe some of those not so good programs. . ."

Customer: "Oh well, they just weren't what we expected."

Sales Rep: "I see. Well, what was the impact of these programs on the kids?"

Customer: "Hmm . . . I hadn't really thought about it. But it wasn't positive of course."

Sales Rep: "Okay, from another angle: what was the reaction from the parents?"

Customer: "Well, that's another story. It was kind of grim in some circumstances."

Sales Rep: "How so?"

Customer: "This is a parent-paid program. Some of the parents felt they had not really gotten their money's worth."

Sales Rep: "So, what, if any, impact did that have on subsequent programs?"

Customer: "As you might expect, enrollment typically dropped."

Sales Rep: "Dropped? By how much? Say, on a percentage basis?"

Customer**:** "Off the top of my head anywhere between 15%-25%."

Sales Rep: "Sounds significant. In terms of dollars what did that mean?"

Customer: "Hmm . . . maybe $4000-$5000 in revenues."

Sales Rep: "Let's take another perspective: How did you make up for the drop in enrollment?"

Customer: "Well, simple really: we intensified our mailings to create more awareness. In a couple of circumstances we paid telephone reps to make calls."

Sales Rep: "Any idea of how much that cost?"

Customer: "Not at this moment but I see your point. You add the loss of the revenue and the increase in cost in acquisition and, well . . . it is significant."

Sales Rep: "So, having a powerful and successful summer school program is important just as is avoiding a dud program?"

Customer: "Yes."

As you can see, analysis questions help explore the situation. From a seemingly unimportant need, the rep got the customer to delve deeper into the situation. As a result, a whole need perspective was created and the need for a solution more sharply defined.

Here's a quick example where a perceived need is minimized:

Customer**:** "Our major concern is this: if the sales on the Tier 3 account grows, at what point do we pass on the account to field sales?"

Sales Rep: "That's interesting, Terry. Quick question; why do you have to pass the account on when it is clearly being developed by the inside representative?"

Customer: "Uh . . . Uh . . . Gee, I don't really know. I guess we've always done it that way thinking the customer gets better service. I never really thought about it but if the customer is growing then he is getting the service."

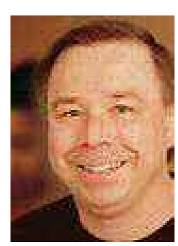
Sales Rep: "My thought too. So, is this really a major problem?"

Customer: "You know what? It isn't!"

Personally, I am convinced that the average client does not really sit down and ponder his or her needs to any great degree. Oh sure, there are exceptions to this statement, but for the most part, clients have not fully thought out the total implications of their problem or opportunity.

The role of the very wise and effective sale rep is to help the client discover the ramifications of a problem or an opportunity. Analysis questions do just that. And the beauty of the whole process is that the customer has gone through a process of "self discovery" which means the issue wasn't thrust upon them by some pushy rep. The customer takes "ownership" of the problem. With ownership comes the commitment to solve the problem or broach the opportunity.

Do not stop with just uncovering a need. Dig deeper with analysis questions and you will see more customer commitment.



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

Here's a Hot Lead. Sorry, Too Late

I was talking to a training prospect who told me they sometimes don't follow up on the leads generated from their website for 2-3 weeks.

Weeks!

That is ridiculous. Why would they even bother having a site and generate traffic?

Inquirers are most interested at the very moment they fill out your form, or call you. Doesn't it make sense to contact these people when their interest is the hottest?

It's tougher than ever today to cut through the noise and capture attention. If you have prospects raising their hands in interest, not contacting them quickly is like flushing piles of cash down the toilet.

At the same time that organizations are sitting on inquiries of various types, their sales reps complain about not being able to reach decision makers.

Some things you just can't make up.

The Sprinkler Guy

I had an issue with a leaky sprinkler system line in my landscaping. I went to the site, HomeAdvisor.com to list my job and get some bids.

Within 60 SECONDS of hitting "send" I received a call from a contractor, who immediately booked an appointment with me to come out that afternoon. He did a great job, and got paid on the spot.

This was not a huge corporation with a sophisticated telecommunications and software system.

It was a guy in a beat-up truck with a cell phone.

He had a simple system in place to be alerted by email when inquiries were submitted and quickly acted on them.

What's interesting is that while I was on the call with that contractor, I received another call from another bidder. Because he called seconds after the other, he missed out on the job. Snooze, you lose.

Scientific Proof

There's actually scientific research to back up the common sense and anecdotal evidence.

In a famous study done by Dr. Ken Oldroyd of Northwestern University and InsideSales.com, the results of 100,000 phone calls were analyzed.

Here are just some of the shocking numbers:

✓ The odds of calling to contact a lead decrease by over 10 times in the 1st hour.

✓ The odds of calling to qualify a lead decrease by over 6 times in the 1st hour.

✓ After 20 hours every additional dial your salespeople make actually hurts your ability to make contact to qualify a lead.

✓ The odds of contacting a lead if called in 5 minutes are 100 times higher versus 30 minutes.

✓ The odds of qualifying a lead if called in 5 minutes are 21 times higher versus 30 minutes.

Let me just highlight this again:

If you call a lead back within five minutes of them contacting you (web, phone) your chances are **100 times** higher than if that lead ages *only 30 minutes* or more.

Are you a betting person? I like those odds.

OK, now sit down for this one.

That study was done in 2007!

Just think how much more impatient people are in today's constantly distracted, ADD society where we'll leave a web page in two seconds of we don't get instant gratification.

Another Study

An excellent Forbes article by Ken Krogue gave further insight into calling leads back quickly, best times to call, etc. Here is some especially useful info from the article:

1. When you call back quickly, you know where they are. If they just filled out a web form, they are still by their computer or device, enhancing your chance of reaching them.

2. When you call back immediately, you are still on their mind. That fades quickly, so acting quickly is to your benefit.

3. The "Wow" effect. Just like with my sprinkler guy, it's impressive when someone gets a call that quickly.

In fact, InsideSales.com built technology to enable a live call within 8-9 SECONDS of a form being filled out Wow, indeed.

So, what is happening with the people who show interest in what you sell? Is there leakage in your lead management, if it even exists?

Granted, everyone reading this might not be able to control this within your organization. But can you influence it?

But for many of you, there are things you can do. If a guy with a truck and a cell phone can, perhaps you can too.

☎

No One Cares About Your Product or Service Except You

I received an email from a sales rep who said,

"It's tough for us to prospect and sell by phone. We're a bit different than most other organizations. We sell an intangible: advertising. People can't actually touch or feel our product. It's much more difficult to sell."

In all fairness to these people, yes, they and others who sell intangibles…insurance, investments, service contracts, software and other services are at a slight disadvantage in that they don't have a physical piece of equipment they can send to the buyer.

Oh, I also regularly hear from people saying,

"It's tough for us to prospect and sell by phone. We sell a physical product. We need to be there face to face to show and demo it."

I can empathize with these folks as well.

However, I don't fundamentally agree with either group.

In fact, when anyone puts too much emphasis on the product or service they sell--"the thing" as I refer to it--that's when they get into trouble and actually create resistance and objections.

When you reduce sales to the most fundamental level, everyone is selling the same thing: the results of what your product or service/intangible will do for the buyer. Selling an intangible should be the same as selling a physical product.

And it's usually the sales reps selling products who rely too much on the product itself, and don't sell what people really want to buy: what they get from the product.

A Quote to Live By

Tweet this one out:

People don't buy your thing, they buy a picture of the end result, with them in the photo.
@ArtSobczak

As I have mentioned numerous times over the past 30+years, you're not selling benefits; you're selling results.

People are buying the *anticipation* of the good feeling they experience from that new computer that screams through programs in less than half the time as their old dinosaur machine that would force them to twiddle their thumbs and whistle as it lumbered through its gyrations.

When I had a lakehouse and was shopping for a 4-wheel ATV, I asked the sales rep what it was like riding on the sand. He said, "It's a lot of fun."

Technically correct, but not emotional.

After I got one, I could tell you that when you open up that throttle on the sand dunes and race around steeply-banked S curves in an almost sideways position, your heart beats so hard and quickly you can see it through your shirt.

Create Your Own Emotional Descriptions

Here's an Action Step for you to take: Sit down with fellow reps and have a brainstorming session where you discuss what people experience as a result of buying from you.

Talk in terms of their emotions.

Then come up with analogies and descriptive words, terms, and phrases that help listeners to actually live the experience before they buy from you. Get all the senses involved.

Can they see, feel, touch, taste, or hear the results? If so, how?

Put yourself in the position of the person experiencing the results and create images that are as emotion-evoking as possible.

Associate the emotions with ones you know they have experienced before.

By the way, don't talk about buying from you; focus on them using your product or service.

Nothing beats actually demonstrating a product or service so that prospects can experience the results first hand. In absence of that, however, you can get close by creating those emotions with your words.

Focus on the great feelings they want and expect, and you'll sell more every time. ☎

Put Them in the Picture

Here's the scenario: You have two stacks of photos dropped on your desk. One is a collection of pictures of a vendor's product, their building, and their employees. The other stack is comprised of photos that have YOU in each one.

Which one do you likely have the most interest in?

Of course, most humans are interested in anything that affects them personally.

The point? When you call a prospect or customer, do you begin by talking about yourself and your company and what YOU want to do? Or do you describe an illustration, putting them in the picture? Remember, people don't care diddly about you and what you want—they want to know how what you have will help them. ☎

What to Avoid Saying, and What TO Say, to Sell at Full Price

How you position your price can determine whether or not someone questions it and tries to get you to drop it.

Do NOT preface your price with any of these words:

- asking
- suggested
- lowest
- best
- reduced
- quoted
- basic
- usually
- book
- normal
- regular
- typically
- starts out at
- retail

These words trigger in the minds of prospects that you are willing tobring the price down substantially.

This is simply shooting yourself in the foot.

Instead, with confidence, say,

"The price is..."

Why?

Because whether they are the CEO or the regular guy down the street,they are getting ready to squeeze a better price out of you.

It's human nature. Everyone wants the best deal. If you give any indication that someone else gets a better price, or that you are open to negotiation, they will seize the opportunity.

I do it. You probably do too.

Every dollar you give away is a dollar directly from the bottom line.

So don't give them a reason to ask, and you will sell at full price more often.

☎

A Trial Closing Question

When the call is running along smoothly and you detect they're leaning in your favor, take their temperature with, **"What else will you need to make a decision to go with this program?"** The answer will indicate how likely they are to make a positive decision, and what else you'll need to provide to help them do it. Or, it can help smoke out any problems, which also is a good outcome.

Don't Let the Guarantee Be The Main Reason for Buying

Guarantees are necessary for credibility, but don't sell your guarantee harder than you sell your value. Some reps use the negative sell just to get a "yes," and then later get exactly what they sold: people asking for their money back.

Ask "What if?"

Ask "What if?" with your prospects and customers.

For example,

"Mr. Prospect, let's set the money issue aside here for a moment and get crazy. What if you did have this plan in place. What are all the positive effects you would notice?"

The Real Secret to Success

While having lunch on an outdoor patio and people watching, it struck me as interesting how people react when they see someone walking a puppy.

They approach the person like an old friend, ooh and ah and just melt.

What's really funny is I saw one of those same people get in her car and flip off another driver who accidentally cut her off in the parking lot.

Why would she—and others--treat a dog more nicely than a human?

Stay with me… there is a sales lesson here.

Gosh, how simplistic can I get? We all know what to do, it's a matter of WANTING to do it.

How about this: Do an "attitude check" before every call you place, and ESPECIALLY the ones you receive, which are interrupting some other activity. Ask yourself, "Am I ready to make this person feel special?"

Keep in mind that your attitude is contagious. As long as you are performing an activity anyway, why not do it with enthusiasm? You'll feel better, and so will the people who hear you. ☎

Do the Math for Them

Stephen Hattabaugh suggests that when customers offer a number that represents dollars or amount of time they're losing, wasting, or missing on a monthly basis, multiply that figure for them to point out the actual yearly total.

For example,

Prospect: "I'd say those workplace injuries probably cost us 20 hours worth of downtime per month."

Caller: "Wow. So what you're saying is that on a yearly basis you're down 240 hours because of injuries."

Listen for Tone On Voice Mail

Craig Clennan suggested that when you reach voice mail, pay particular attention to the decision maker's personality on their greeting. This gives you some insight into the type of person they are and how you might approach them. Also, listen carefully to how they pronounce their name. This small point could help you avoid an embarassing mistake.

Get Info First

We often preach about the value of collecting information prior to speaking with a decision maker. The more you know about the company, decision maker, and buying process, the more finely-tuned your opening, questions, and overall call will be.

Joe Adams likes to ask questions of receptionists and operators at the car dealerships he calls into to sell his training for dealers:

"How does change happen there at the dealership?"

"When you implement something new there, who normally takes the ball and runs with it?"

How to Get Referrals

Do you have so many referrals that you do not have time to call them all?

Crazy question, I know. Most people have very few referrals. Why? They do not ask for them. And just asking is not enough. You need to ask in the right way to maximize the number, and quality of prospects you receive.

Martyn Hotchkiss was asking for referrals, and regularly meeting a brick wall. Here is what he was saying.

"Do you know of anyone else who could be interested in our products and services?"

He'd hear responses like, "Not really," or, "Can't think of anyone at the moment."

And, really, that question invites the easy response from the customer.

Martyn changed his approach and has found more success by "preframing" the question by leading up to it with a short series of closed questions:

"Mr. Buyer, In your job as ___, you will meet a lot of other people with similar jobs at seminars and conferences, don't you?"

"Yes"

"And some of these will have the same sorts of needs as you?"

"Yes"

"In fact, you probably discuss these types of products with each other to find out the good ones and the bad ones, don't you?"

"Yes"

"Of those people you know, are there any who have been interested in these products?"

Martyn usually doesn't have to ask who these other people are, because at this point, they are already thinking of them, and the names seem to pop out!