



SMART CALLING REPORT

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This Experiment Showed What C-Level Execs Respond To. We Show You How to Use It

Getting in to speak with executives at the highest levels of companies of course requires a lot more than jumping on the phone and winging it.

The training company, Corporate Visions, conducted an interesting experiment on getting access to C-level buyers. They did an entire article about it. (<https://corporatevisions.com/executive-level-selling/>)

While their article goes deep into the weeds, and uses scientific terminology, I'll summarize what they did, the results, and then show you how you can use the winning methodology.

The Experiment

Corporate Visions partnered with Dr. Nick Lee, Professor of Marketing at Warwick Business School, to test common messaging approaches to use to get access to an executive and secure time on their calendar.

They got 400 C-level executives with VP or higher titles in companies larger than \$50 million, across multiple industries, who had authority over budget and purchasing decisions to participate in an actual simulation.

The executives were told they were reading an email from an outside vendor sales rep they didn't know and had never met with before.

They were then randomly divided among four test messaging conditions. After reading the message, they answered a series of questions, including whether they would take a meeting, decline, or delegate.

Four Test Messages

They tested four common approaches. I am quoting them here directly from their article

1. Unique Product Value Proposition:

This approach uses a proven model for creating and delivering a differentiated product value proposition that shows how the seller's solution helps solve a problem in a new, different, or better way than competitive alternatives.

2. Known Business Initiative + ROI:

This is a popular approach that's been widely promoted for the last 20 years across a variety of sales processes and skills training programs. It's where the seller demonstrates they've done their homework and understands the priorities or challenges that the executive is trying to address. Then, they share quantified ROI results from other similar customers and offers an estimated potential impact on the executive's business.

3. Provocative Industry Insight:

This approach introduces a new need the executive hasn't considered up to this point, based on the seller's experience with other customers. This "Unconsidered Need" may be a problem or missed opportunity the executive doesn't know they have or doesn't fully appreciate. This is an approach we've tested and proven to work in other sales conversations but had not yet tested specifically as an approach to gaining executive access.

4. Competitive Benchmark Offer:

This approach has generated a lot of buzz recently. The seller offers to benchmark information compar-

ing the prospective executive's company to other similar companies. Ideally, it includes exclusive data your company developed with existing customers in relevant industries. This data offers executives a chance to see how they stack up across a range of key performance indicators.

Can you guess which one performed the worst?

It was Number 2, The "Known Business Initiative + ROI."

Personally, I found that a bit surprising. But their reasoning made sense.

Explained in Layman's Terms

I'll put it in layman's terms and simplify it with an example: if you tell an executive that you know they are looking to break into a new market segment and can show them how to do that with a 15% ROI, well, that is probably something they've already studied and came up with their own possible plan of attack for.

You really haven't told them anything new, or given them a reason to shift from what they already are thinking about.

Putting that into an opening, voice mail, or email might pique some curiosity, but it isn't as compelling as the winner in the test.

Which was, Number 3, **Provocative Industry Insight**.

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Sales Observations

As we enter the New Year, it's normal for many people to embark on resolutions, goals, intentions, etc.

And, it's a fact that most of these will go by the wayside by the end of January. Sound familiar?

One of the main reasons is that people go about it in a way where they set themselves up to fail. They seek out to DO something different, without first BEING the person who will consistently commit to doing what is necessary.

Transformational coach, Jim Fortin calls this the Be-Do-Have model.

Let's focus on sales and new business as an example. If someone says they intend to prospect more in 2020, they might have good intentions initially, and begin on that path. But, life inevitably gets in the way.

They go back to being the person they have always identified with. The person who did not prospect regularly.

On the other hand, if a sales pro shifts their thinking and entire being to "I AM a sales pro who prospects one hour per day, non-negotiable," then the activity—the DOING—comes as a result.

The key is that it becomes part of your identity. It is who you are.

To simplify it, we will never accomplish anything we do not already see ourselves accomplishing.

What's very interesting is that the subconscious mind can't distinguish between what is real, and what is imagined.

And our subconscious actually controls our behavior.

So, you CAN tell yourself that you are the person who prospects every day. But you must do it repeatedly.

I have just barely scratched the surface here with this principle. I encourage you to check out Jim's work: JimFortin.com. I encourage you to also download his free "Master Thought Formula" there.

He also has an awesome podcast (there are a couple past episodes on this). Personally, I have been in his coaching program the past couple of years and it truly is life-changing, without the rah-rah and fluff that so many motivational speakers regurgitate.

More on BEING the person who is a top performer: If you spend—waste, actually—time on social media that is not business-related, do you think that is the behavior of the highest performers in your field?

Likely not.

The problems with frittering away time on Facebook and Instagram are well-documented. In addition to the time-suck, the content itself... the toxicity, negativity, political arguing, and self-comparing... all affect people both consciously and subconsciously.

And not in a positive way.

How about instead having some go-

to educational, motivational and inspirational sites and podcasts you make a habit of visiting and consuming.

I can think of no other profession where our results--and income--relies more on our attitude, and how we feel when we are performing our job.

So how about making this the year where you get obsessed with your self-development? The fact that you are reading this says that you are already ahead of about 95% of the population.

How about getting into the top 99 percent? You CAN do it!

Speaking of inspirational material, I found an amazing Ted Talk from the greatest college basketball coach of all time, John Wooden (Google it and listen several times). He gave this 18-minute talk when he was 91, in his wheelchair, and shared an incredible amount of wisdom.

Directly related to what I just mentioned about comparing yourself to others, he said, "Never try to be better than someone else. Always learn from others, and never cease trying to be the best you can be." Further, he added, "If you get too engrossed and involved and concerned in regard to things over which you have no control, it will adversely affect the things over which you have control."

Go and make 2020 your best year ever!

Art

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Avoid All of the Mistakes in This Opening

Here's a call opening I received that carries a ton of lessons on what not to do:

"Hello, this is _____ with Action Promotion. I was cleaning out some old files here from a sales rep who didn't do a very good job, and I see you had some interest at one time a couple of years ago in advertising with us, and I'd like to talk with you about that again."

I know there are skilled, professional sales reps out there selling advertising—but they're not the ones I get calls from. I hear from people who give that business a bad name.

Let's look at what is wrong with this opening:

1. *"I was cleaning out some old files here . . ."* Wow! Doesn't that make one feel special! Consider the same approach, different situation: *"Hello, Brittany, it's Tad Johnson. Hey, I was just cleaning out my contacts on my iPhone and I saw we texted each other a couple of years ago . . ."*

2. *" . . . from a sales rep who didn't do a very good job . . ."* Nice way to build credibility in the first 10 seconds of a phone call, huh? So, before I hear a results-oriented reason why I should spend any time with this guy, he's hinting at the inefficiency of his personnel department and sales management.

3. *" . . . and I see you had some interest at one time a couple of years ago in advertising with us . . ."* This statement only serves to put someone on the defensive. Even if I had expressed interest at one time (which I had not; this company comes no where close to reaching my market), it was over two years ago! For example, think about all the telephone solicitations and emails you've received during the past three months but didn't buy from. How many of those can you remember the precise details of? Now, can you even recall any of the calls you received over **two years** ago?

4. *" . . . and I'd like to talk with you about that again."* Am I missing some-

thing here? Where's the benefit . . . the results?

This next point is true for everyone, but many advertising sales reps seem to be the worst culprits: prospects do not buy advertising (or any product or service itself). They might even have negative impressions of advertising in general. When they invest in advertising they do so with the hope of the end results: increased store traffic, more phone calls, more leads, or more sales.

Recommendation

OK, smart guy, you might be thinking, what approach *should* he have taken? Easy. Treat it like any other prospecting call:

☐ In his preparation he should realize that it's probably a good idea to not even mention any past conversations until he's well into the call with the prospect. After all, if the old sales rep was as bad as he says, what kind of impression did that leave on the prospects he contacted, even if they remember?

☐ He should collect information before speaking with the prospect. What my company does might have been a logical place to start. He could have quickly realized we weren't a prospect. (No, on second thought, it wouldn't have mattered to this guy. Even after I told him my buyers are not Data Processing Managers and Directors, he still tried to pitch me on the number of people I could reach, and the "low" investment per contact.)

☐ The opening has got to hint at results the person would be interested in, and then get him involved. Let's assume he did indeed target my market, and learned a little about me before speaking with me. A good opening would be, **"I'm ___ with Action Advertising. We specialize in helping marketers get their message out to sales leaders who buy sales training materials for their companies. I see that's an audience you promote to, and we might have a few alternatives to help you acquire customers at a relatively low investment per account."**



What Superstar Sales Reps Never Say


Benjamin Franklin said, "He who is good at making excuses is seldom good for anything else." Let's look at excuses for not getting a sale which are never heard from superstar salespeople, according to consultant John Graham.

- *"They didn't get back to me."* Or, *"They are getting back to me."* Expecting someone else to take the action, stops the action. Never wait long for someone to take the next step.

- *"I didn't have time."* The same as *"I was too busy."* If it is important, make the time. Otherwise you'll wear the label of "Can't handle the job."

- *"We've been playing telephone tag."* Call more often, set a phone appointment, give them your home number or cellular number, insist that you're paged during lunch . . . do whatever it takes to be sure you're accessible, and that you reach them.

- *"I haven't been able to get through to her."* Why not? Are people ignoring your voice mails? Are screeners casting you aside? Perhaps your message is not compelling enough. You've got to provide them with a reason to want to speak with you. Stand out from the crowd. Get creative. Send flowers, gizmos, whatever it takes to get attention.

The only measure for success in sales is performance. "Excuse Makers" are a dime a dozen. "Roadblock Removers" are the sales superstars. 

Consider the Source When Hearing No

An online travel article discussed secrets of getting what you want from hotels and airlines. It made a valuable point not just for travelers, but for salespeople as well: Don't accept a "no" from someone not qualified to give you a "yes."



Six Objections Mistakes, and What TO Do Instead

Many sales reps have been taught to "overcome" objections, and other nonsense that is actually counterproductive, and causes prospects to become more defensive. Here are six of the common mistakes I see, and we'll then look at the preferred, "consultative" response to objections.

1. Putting Words Into the Prospect's Mouth

Prospect: "I need versatility."

Mistake: "You know you need to have flexibility to move your funds from one account to another."

Consultative Sales Rep: "Could you explain to me what you mean by versatility?"

The logic here is simple but powerful. Your version of "versatility" (moving funds from one account to another) and the client's version of the word may be miles apart. The consultative rep listens for words which may have a broad interpretation and attempts to bring focus to the objection.

2. Insulting the Prospect

Prospect: "I find your prices are very high."

Mistake: "If I understand you, you are not interested in quality, is that correct?"

Consultative Sales Rep: "I understand Price is critical in any decision. In order to make sure that we are comparing 'apples to apples' can you tell me what you are comparing our price to?"

It is truly sad. Countless sales are lost to price every day simply because many sales reps make false assumptions that belittle the client. A consultative sales rep, through questioning, seeks to learn exactly what the prospect is evaluating and then educates him/her. For example, your price may include a warranty where the competitor's might not.

3. Avoiding the Issue

Prospect: "Quite frankly, your service is useless."

Mistake: "What are you looking for in service?"

Consultative Sales Rep: "I understand. Obviously something has happened to make you feel that way. Can you tell me about it?"

Instead of being defensive or asking what the client is looking for in terms of service, the consultative sales rep recognizes that this objection will not be answered until the prospect has the opportunity to "purge" himself. In addition, finding out the cause of the dissatisfaction gives the sales rep an opportunity to correct the problem or future problems. The questioning does not necessarily ensure a sale will be made but it does begin to position the rep and the company as responsive.

4. Demand to Demand

Prospect: "The return on investment is too low."

Mistake: "What kind of return on investment are you looking for?"

Consultative Sales Rep: "Rate of return is very important. What are you comparing us to in saying that the rate is too low?"

This response is similar to #2. Consultative reps acknowledge the customer's objection and then seek to narrow the scope. As it stands, this objection is vague and can not possibly be answered effectively without some comparative basis.

5. Shifting Responsibility

Prospect: "Your delivery standards are too slow."

Mistake: "I wish there was something I could do but my hands are tied when it comes to shipping, Five days is the best I can do."

Consultative Sales Rep: "I can see that delivery is critical to you. What has made you feel that our standards are too slow . . . ?"

The consultative sales rep does not blame others. He/she seeks understanding so that solutions can be developed. Sometimes that takes guts. Asking "why" the product needs to be delivered in X days requires an element of courage. But it is the type of question that gets the customer thinking. For example, you might hear,

"We've always had delivery in three days."

Is this a standard of habit or of necessity? If it is a standard of habit, perhaps you can offer some value-added service that the extra two days might bring (for example, a lower price because expedited shipping is not required).

6. Contradicting the Prospect

Prospect: "You guys always seem to be on strike or experiencing work delays."

Mistake: "No, that's not correct. Did you know we have not had a work stoppage in 18 months?"

Consultative Sales Rep: "Yes, in the past we have had work delays, and over the past 18 months management and union have worked together to solve this issue. Can you tell me if you have experienced any delays so that I can investigate further?"

In this situation, the sales rep acknowledges the prospect's perception of a problem and then seeks to explain and investigate. By using the word "and" instead of "but" to explain management and union efforts, the consultative sales rep does not demean the prospect's evaluation. Further, the consultative rep seeks to determine if something has occurred recently to prompt this remark. Ultimately, it gets the customer to focus on the reality of the present rather than the events of the past.

Practice with your own objections. Use these ideas and approach objections from a problem-solving, consultative perspective.



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(continued from cover page)

The researchers suggest that to get someone really interested enough to take a meeting, you need to “destabilize a preference.” (Which Number 2 does **not** do).

This is done by “offering new information that they don’t know. Offering that new information either changes how they define the problem or changes the range of options they have available to solve it.”

Number 3, when using the Corporate Visions “Why Now Story Model” helps to accomplish this.

The Why Now Story Model

Here is that model as they describe it:

1. Present a business issue rooted in external trends and factors the executive will identify with and connect back to their strategic initiatives;

2. Introduce Some Unconsidered Needs—that is, unforeseen problems, challenges or missed opportunities your prospect has underappreciated or doesn’t yet know about that create flaws or limitations in his or her current approach;

3. Provide a solution story, demonstrating specifically how you can resolve the Unconsidered Needs you identified and enable them to realize their goals;

4. Quantify business impact by sharing a preliminary calculation of how your solution can positively influence revenues, cost savings, and operating margin.

They do not give an example of how to use this with actual messaging. But I have taken the liberty to do so.

Here is an opening that would use that model.

A little background as to how I used the model: the hypothetical sales rep here did some research to learn about the company’s expansion plans. In this case, it would have been pretty easy to find online through news sources.

“Hi Ms. Prospect, I’m Dale Seller with Compliance Automation. I understand that your team had California as one of the possible states for expansion, but the new independent contractor law could delay or eliminate those plans. There actually is a unique, little-known way to still have service providers considered completely independent there. In fact, we’ve successfully implemented it for a client in a US county with a major city that enacted a similar law, and they’ve avoided \$4 million in expenses this year. I’d like to ask a few questions to see if it would make sense to have a conversation.”

Even if you are not selling to the C-suite, this is a sound approach in generating interest. Use your Smart Calling intel, and this approach (which is essentially a form of the Smart Calling model) and you’ll enhance your chances of entering into a meaningful conversation. ☎

Not “I.” Use “You” Instead

Record your calls and have a few transcribed. (The mobile app, Temi, is great and inexpensive for the transcription.) Then go through and circle every use of “I.” Think of how you could have instead used “you” and “your.” For example, instead of, “I think our product is the best for that application,” you could say,

“When you use your new system for that application, you’ll notice how much easier the job becomes, and how much more quickly you finish.”



A “Saturday Night Live” Questioning Technique

There’s a classic Saturday Night Live routine where David Spade plays the annoying reception person, and communicates primarily through fill-in-the-blank questions. **“And your name is . . . ?”** **“And your purpose for being here is . . . ?”** When used at the right time, in moderation, this is an effective technique. For example, you might say, **“So, your main goal for this project would be . . . ?”**



A Few Great Questions

I’ve got a bit of an obsession with sales books. Always have. Amazon has compounded that with their suggestive selling. As a result, I have about 20 new sales books stacked up that I need to get to.

With that said, I also enjoy going to my shelves containing the hundreds of sales books I’ve collected over the years. What’s great is that basic human psychology has not changed. What was written years ago usually is still very relevant today.

Here’s an example. I pulled off my shelf and skimmed through **“The I HATE Selling Book,”** by Allan S. Boress. I saw some awesome questions.

Here’s a question to learn the decision-making process and time frames:

“What does the decision-making process look like for hiring our firm?”

If you are being considered along with at least two of your other competitors, ask this question:

“Based on what you know so far, and if my company wasn’t involved in the process, between the other two firms, which would you recommend?”

This usually whittles their choices down to you and the remaining vendor. You could get even more information by asking,

“What was it about (the company they wouldn’t select) that would cause you to eliminate them?”

A Question to Ask Yourself

The best questions are the ones we ask ourselves. How about this one:

“What would need to happen for me to increase my income by 50% in 2020?”

Begin a list with your answers. You’ll find they are very attainable.



Top Tips

Prospecting Ideas for Appointment-Selling

I was doing research for a client training program and going through my material I've written over the years. Early in my business I became friends with another trainer who also focused on prospecting. While he never became a big "name," Bill Bishop's material was solid. And it's just as applicable today. Here's some of Bill's advice on "selling the appointment":

"Is there any reason why we can't get together around 8:40 this Wednesday morning?"

"Is there any reason why your partner/attorney/Aunt Flabby can't join us?"

"Would it be a problem for us to meet around 9:20 Tuesday?"

"Do you have any objection to a 10 minute meeting so you can see our _____?"

The key words in closing these appointments are in **bold print**. Master the key words, and follow them with the words that are appropriate to your situation. Of course, if you aren't setting appointments, you could use these same key words to close the sale by phone.

Stalls Are For Horses

Here are more ideas from Bill Bishop, from on stalls and objections.

After hearing something like, "I want to discuss it," or "Give me a call back," you respond with:

1. **"I understand. That usually means there is a money-related question, or some other question I haven't answered yet. What is the question?"**

2. **"I understand. I'm sure you're leaning in one direction right now. Which way are you leaning?"**

3. **"I understand. Let's talk about the worst thing that could happen if you went with it. The worst that could happen is that _____."**

You then fill in the blank with something like,

"...you'd try us out and find we are the same as what you're getting now, and that wouldn't even be so bad." ☎

Dumb Questions Create Objections

As I've said quite often, there *are* such things as dumb questions.

For example, during a prospecting call, or in the early stages of a follow-up call, you don't want to ask questions that invite an easy objection from them, such as,

"So I guess you're satisfied with your present vendor?"

Or, *"I'd imagine that you don't want to go through the trouble to evaluate a new supplier?"*

As goofy as these might seem, I've heard them.

If someone is resisting as a matter of instinct—which most people are wont to do—let them think of their own reason to justify it, and then allow them to verbalize it.

What occasionally happens is that by actually applying some rational thought to their resistance, then stating it out loud, they might realize it's not logical, and might become more open-minded to your suggestion. ☎

Get Agreement on What They Mean

A critical part of listening is ensuring you understand what the speaker said. If you are a bit cloudy, try saying,

"Let me see if I understand what you're saying . . ."

"So if I'm following you, you're saying that . . ."

"What I'm hearing is that you . . ."

"It appears that what you want is . . ."

When you're more certain, paraphrase with,

"As you see it . . ."

"It seems to you that . . ."

"What you feel, then, is . . ." ☎

Stay Sharp at All Times

With the repetition of phone work naturally comes the temptation to become lax with some of the basics, especially when you're quite busy. Here are two areas to especially be cautious with.

➔ **Leaving rushed voice mail messages.** Particularly your phone number. If your goal to have them return your call, a rushed phone number that's unintelligible negates that possibility. And most of us are unaware we're doing it. Here's a good strategy: According to Nancy Tuckerman and Nancy Dunman, authors of the *Amy Vanderbilt Complete Book of Etiquette*, before you leave your phone number, say, **"Here's my number,"** and then pause for one or two seconds. It gives them a chance to retrieve a pen. Then pause every few digits, and repeat the number at the end so the person can check what he has written.

➔ **Blurting out your name, and your company name.** I've heard introductions that sounded like the speaker's mouth was taped shut. Articulate your introduction, and speak at a rate so you're understood. Be proud of your name and affiliation!

And remember, even though you might be repeating something 30 or more times daily, they're hearing you for the first time. ☎

Get Referrals from Within Their Company

If you have a customer within a company that has multiple locations, or many departments at one location, you probably haven't even scratched the surface of potential business. The hard part is beyond you—getting the company as a customer. Now that you're in the door, part of the family, ferret out other opportunities. Ask your customer, "Who else within your company also uses/does _____, who could also take advantage of something similar to what we're doing together?" Prompt them a bit: **"How about other departments? Other locations?"**

Even if they come up empty, ask them, **"If I can find other buyers on my own, it wouldn't be a problem if I mention your name as a reference, would it?"** ☎

Your Call IS Important

Keep this in mind: if you and your company didn't deliver value to customers, you wouldn't be in business.

Especially remember this as you're planning and placing calls. Too often reps will have the feeling that they're calling busy people and they don't want to interrupt the prospect . . . or what they're calling about is insignificant.

Nonsense! Get that out of your head! As long as you're able to clearly and concisely articulate your potential value to a valid recipient, you're not wasting their time. Their job relies on evaluating and implementing new ideas, products, and services.

Motivational Ideas

Here are self-improvement and motivational ideas from Art Mortell, in his book, **"World Class Selling."**

Use "Forced Scheduling" to push yourself into success patterns. Set before-hours telephone appointments, or brainstorming sales-idea breakfast sessions with others to build successful habits.

Exaggerate. Take what you typically avoid, and get outrageous with the activity. If you avoid prospecting, hold a marathon prospecting day, doing nothing but cold calling. Comparatively, the one or two hours you should prospect regularly will seem like child's play.

Emulate. Look at the people who are achieving at the levels you aspire to. Study their positive characteristics and emulate them. Don't try to *become* them.

Characteristics of the Best Conversationalists

Visualize right now some of the best conversationalists you know . . . the people who make you feel most at ease, those you really enjoy speaking with. They probably have several of these characteristics: 1. they listen with feeling; 2. they show a sincere interest in what you have to say; 3. they ask you questions; 4. they get you talking about one of your favorite subjects: you. These are the characteristics essential to building rapport and successful selling by phone. Analyze yourself in each of the areas, and work to ensure you excel at them. ☎

How You React to Your Mistakes Determines Your Destiny

We all flub up occasionally. How you deal with it is what charts your success or demise.

The great, late, college football coach, Bear Bryant, said about mistakes, "You should do three things with them. Admit them. Learn from them. Make sure they never happen again."

Dr. Martin Groder said, "You won't learn anything from a mistake if you refuse to admit your error in judgement to yourself."

You'll just commit the same mistake over and over again. Like using an opening that elicits more resistance than interest, or using a worn-out closing technique that only serves to "close" the door.

Groder offers further advice we can relate to objections:

"When someone tells you you're wrong, resist the urge to defend yourself or deny that a problem exists. Assume your critic is right until he/she is proven wrong."

Except, with objections we don't want to *prove* them wrong, we use questions to help them come to a better conclusion. ☎

You're Not a "Talking Email"

Keep in mind you are not a "talking email." That's a caller who spews the same information, call after call, with little regard for questioning and the needs of the listener. For example, the caller might repeatedly say, "The reason for the call is to let you know about our special on muffler belts this month. They come in six colors and are only \$5.95 each. Would you like some?" A tape recording could give that same message, for gosh sakes! Ensure you're calling with prepared questions, and only present after you've learned of their needs.

By the way, you *can* take a specific offer, and make that the premise of your call—you just don't give the entire spiel at the beginning. Instead, you might start with,

"Pat, when I saw this month's special, I thought of you, and how it would be perfect for you because of what you told me last time about how muffler-related items move well in your store. (pause) Tell me, what brand of muffler belts are you carrying now?"

After layering questions further—questions designed to uncover needs-related information—then the listener would be in a much more receptive frame of mind to hear about the belts, plus the rep could tailor his presentation to fit snugly with the prospect's situation. ☎

Regardless of how many calls you placed or received today, your next one is the first one to that person. Treat it like the only one for the day.

When you greet someone on an incoming call, view it as escorting a friend into your home. You wouldn't frown or act indifferently. Greet them warmly, with enthusiasm.

Practice tongue twisters to articulate clearly. Recite this one now, several times while picking up speed each time: "Frank phoned four pharmaceutical factories feeling fresh and fulfilled." ☎

Closing Ideas for Your Script

Here are ideas to use when preparing and delivering your recommendation and closing script.

✓ When prefacing your close, in addition to “recommendation,” consider,

“I suggest . . .”

“If I were in your situation, here’s what I would do . . .”

“My advice is to . . .”

✓ After prefacing, make it easy for them to take the action:

“Here’s all we need to do to get started . . .”

“And it will be very simple to begin the implementation process . . .”

✓ Don’t rush through your close, or change your tone of voice. If they detect you’re uncomfortable, they might have second thoughts.

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?”

“Am I talking about what you’re interested in?”

“Are any of these things resonating with you?”

“Am I on the right track here?”

“Are we on the same page here?”

They Don’t Always Need a Problem

When prospects tell us, “I’m not having any problems with my current supplier,” our first thought typically is to ask questions to get them to admit, or realize problems they might be having. R. Scott Winters, suggests an alternative method. Respond with,

“I’m glad to hear you’re not having problems . . . but are problems the only criteria you use when making the decision to change suppliers?”

Generally, the answer will be no. Then you have the perfect opportunity to question further along that path, learning more about the other criteria, and then following up with your appropriate product/service recommendations.

Help Them See a Problem

Even though the previous point presents an alternative, asking about problems is still an effective way to open up their mind. However, 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?”

Find the Real Reason for Objecting

Get to heart of the reason for an objection: “It seems the real decision here is this: is (the ultimate benefit they’ll receive) more important than (the objection)?” For example, “It seems the real decision here is this: is giving your salespeople a proven system for generating additional add-on sales more important than the time they’d be investing in the half-day program, time off of the phone?”

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