

Chapter 1

Calling All Sales Professionals!

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The surge in telecommunications technology has changed the very nature of — well — communication. From anywhere in the world, you can reach out and touch someone. Or text-message them. Or at least leave a voice mail. You can even arrange a conference call so that several parties meet remotely, or set up a videoconference and put faces to voices. There's no doubt about it — you're in the era of the telephone. (And if you *have* any doubt, just listen to the orchestra of cellphone rings in the middle of a shopping mall, or count the drivers who whiz by with a phone attached to their ears.) So it's natural that the telephone is the most important tool at the disposal of any salesperson.

If you're a sales professional, you may not consider yourself to be in *telephone* sales — maybe because your job title isn't "telemarketer" or because you don't work in a call center. But in today's world, *all* salespeople rely on the telephone to be successful in their work.

In any sales scenario, the first contact with a potential customer is likely to be via the phone, even if follow-up is face to face. Although more and more commerce is carried out on the Internet, few business-client relationships are forged without regular phone contact. The days of the door-to-door encyclopedia peddler are long past. In fact, it's not unusual for, say, a printer in the Midwest to serve a magazine publisher on the West Coast, executing business entirely over the phone.

Now is the time for all sales pros to step up to the phone and master this amazing sales tool. This chapter gives you a quick rundown on telephone sales and serves as a jumping-off point to this book and to the world of telephone sales.

Plugging In to Telephone Sales

Telephone sales is much more than simply picking up the phone and asking someone to buy something. Telephone sales is the primary sales communication system for any salesperson on the planet. The formula for telephone-sales success is complex if not complicated. It's more involved than just picking up the receiver and punching in a phone number. Just as any sales effort requires planning, preparation, and practice, telephone sales demands much effort before you can count on closing sales at regular intervals.

Are you telephone-sales material?

Do you have to be a certain “type” to succeed at phone sales? Nope. In order to be a good telephone-sales pro, you must be organized, detailed, persistent, and able to read people and situations in a single call. Although individuals with certain qualities may be faster to adapt, I believe that anyone with the drive and desire to succeed can do so.

Sure, those outgoing types who are fearless about meeting new people, who love a challenge, and who thrive on competition may dive right into the sales pool and find the temperature just right. But phone-sales success demands more than personality. Whether you're the classic “sales type” or you have other qualities valuable to effective selling, all salespeople benefit from honing their knowledge and sales skills, as well as maintaining a positive attitude. (Check out Chapter 2 for more on what a thriving telephone-sales pro needs.)

Obeying the Do Not Call laws

Critical to any salesperson who uses the phone to sell is a clear and thorough understanding of national and state Do Not Call laws. More than 150 million people have registered to have their names and phone listings added to these Do Not Call lists, which blocks them from most telemarketing calls.

Salespeople who sell products or services direct to consumers — life, auto, and health insurance; long-distance or cable services; real

estate; replacement windows; and myriad others — must be aware of the Do Not Call registries and adhere to their restrictions.



If you sell business to business, you don't have to worry about the no-call issues, because businesses can't register with national or state Do Not Call lists.



If you're caught breaking the Do Not Call law, the federal fine is \$11,000 per offense — not an inconsequential amount of money. For more information about the Do Not Call Registry and state laws involving telemarketing restrictions, read Chapter 3.

Gearing Up for Winning Calls

Great telephone-sales calls don't just happen, whether you're a veteran or a newbie. A lot goes into a sales call before your fingers ever hit that first touch button. You master all the details about the service or product you sell, and you research everything possible about the person or company you're calling. You practice your delivery, prepare for questions or challenges, and — last but not the least — you prepare yourself! This section gives a quick 4-1-1 on preparing to make your calls. (You can also check out Part II for more in-depth info.)

Studying up for call success

When it comes to making the most out of your telephone-sales career, the same advice that applied to your classes in high school or college still applies in the workplace: Keep up with the daily assignments, and the big tests seem to take care of themselves.



Each day, when you arrive at the office, set aside some time for reviewing your schedule. Then study up for each and every phone call. Review your notes to refresh your knowledge, and if you discover some gaps, do what you must to fill them, whether digging deeper into your files or researching on the Internet. (Refer to Chapter 4 for more advice.)

Prospecting smarter, not harder

Telephone sales demands work, but you can manage your prospecting work in an efficient way. *Prospecting*, the heart and soul of telephone sales, simply means you invest effort consistently seeking new customers.



The following tips can help you work smarter and increase your effectiveness and productivity when prospecting. You can also check out Chapter 5 for more info.

- ✓ **Batch like calls together.** By addressing similar questions, challenges, objections, and related issues, you gain a smoother flow and greater efficiency. For example, call all small, independent tire dealers in one batch, and then call the attorneys in the next batch, then the dentists, and so forth.

You also can batch by sales stage — make all your presentation appointments at the same time, all your lead follow-up calls together, and all client-referral calls in a group.

- ✓ **Recognize your limits.** No one can stay on the phone for eight hours straight. To maximize your production and maintain a high energy level, plan a 10- or 15-minute break after each hour of calling. Stretch, grab a snack, and get back for another hour of calls. An hour to 75 minutes is really the maximum time to be calling back-to-back.

Overcoming sales aversion

No matter how experienced or how successful, all sales pros are stricken with sales-call aversion from time to time. *Sales call aversion* is when you try to avoid, delay, or divert your prospecting and lead follow-up calls to later or never. A few examples may be boredom, stress, or fear of calling. The best cures, however, work for almost all forms of sales aversion.



Sticking to routine is a healthy way to control the condition. If you're in the habit of setting aside every morning for calls, you likely have an easier time moving forward even if you're temporarily uninspired. For more prescriptions for sales aversion, check out Chapter 6.

Making the most of your time

Telephone salespeople are plagued by time burglars. Taking a bite out of time crime is critical — and it's not so hard after you identify what is preventing you from using your time wisely. The following two culprits can steal a lot of valuable time. If you can eye them and make them a priority, you may be able to increase your productivity.

- ✓ **Low-return activities:** Held captive by service calls and paperwork duties, the sales pro watches as valuable opportunities slip away. Zero in on the high-return activities and make them your number-one priority. In sales as in other disciplines, 20

percent of your efforts bring in 80 percent of your successes. So determine what comprises the 20 percent and make it a priority. This, combined with a zero tolerance for time stealers, is certain to control time loss.

- ✔ **In-between call breaks:** They may be a few seconds — but sometimes these breaks are three, four, or even five minutes. However, these seemingly small breaks can add up. For example, say you spend five hours making 100 calls a day, with three minutes between each call. If you reduced your in-between call breaks from three minutes to one minute, you could make an additional 200 calls per day.

Instead of allowing these thieves to steal from your telephone-sales success, zero in on the high-return activities and make them your number-one priority. (Read Chapter 7 for more ways to free yourself up to become a more productive member of your sales force.)

Making the Call

The time has come — you're ready to pick up the phone and sell! What to expect? Well, at the most fundamental level, you may anticipate a yes, a no, or a maybe. That outcome depends largely on what you do from the moment you connect with the prospect until you ask for the business. This section looks at the possibilities.

Reaching the right person

The *gatekeeper* is the person who guards the decision maker — the person you want to talk to. You must be able to get past the gatekeeper to make the sale. If you're stopped at the administrative assistant's extension, a few tricks are at your disposal:

- ✔ If you know the decision maker's extension, call before or after the close of business and hope the assistant isn't at work — and the boss is.
- ✔ Call someone else within the company, apologize, and say you were transferred to the wrong extension. This individual may transfer you to the exec's direct line.
- ✔ Based on the assistant's extension, try keying in a number higher or lower. For example, if the assistant's extension is 234, it's highly probable that the decision maker's extension is 233 or 235. (If you don't reach the executive, then try one of the other two ploys.)

For more hints and tips for reaching the decision maker, read Chapter 8.

Opening moves

The *opening* is the most critical step in charting your sales call. Your first seven seconds determine whether you get the sale. You *don't* want to leave it to chance. Put in time to craft a powerful, stop-in-your-tracks opening, and then practice it until it's perfect.

Every successful opening is built on certain key components. You must also avoid certain words or phrases like the plague (see Chapter 20). Chapter 9 is a great source of statement templates, as well as other ideas for winning greetings.

Asking the questions first

The best way to sell is through questioning. A masterful telephone salesperson focuses on the questions because well-crafted questions elicit answers that can be used to guide the successful sale.



Without an effective questioning process, you can't determine desire, motivation, needs, wants, expectations, ability, authority, time frame, competition, priority of needs and wants, and a host of other factors that influence the buying decision.

After you get the answers to these questions, *then* it's your turn to talk. You have a lot to consider in crafting and preparing your questions. Chapter 10 provides more on questioning.

Hear this!

Salespeople are cast as talkers, not *listeners*. But all good sales pros — and especially *telephone-sales* pros — are successful because they listen, not because they talk. The better you are at listening, the more you learn about the prospect and the better equipped you are to sell to the prospect when it comes your turn to talk.



But listening is more than shutting your mouth. In order to pick up and process valuable information that helps you to shape your sales presentation, you have to be proactive — even if you feel like listening is a passive exercise.

Learning to love the pause and making peace with the awkward silence are two important skills that make you a master listener. Chapter 11 shows you the way to these and other valuable tricks.

Delivering dynamite presentations

The sales presentation is where *you* do the talking. And if you've followed all the other guidelines to phone-sales success, a powerful presentation is likely to follow.



Presentations that turn a prospect into a client don't happen by accident. Ever watch those courtroom dramas on TV? You know, the ones where the lawyers chase down every last detail and anticipate every move from objections to surprise witnesses? That's the kind of work that results in a winning sales presentation. And if you prepare your presentation as if it were your closing statement to the jury, you're well on your way to success. For more advice, turn to Chapter 12.

Closing the Deal

If you do an effective job throughout the sales process, the *close* is merely the natural — and successful — ending to your effort. Closing does require careful attention, as much preparation as any other step of the process, and an artful reaction to any last-minute objections. This section shows what you need to do for a successful close.

Dealing with objections

You know you've reached savvy-sales status when you come to welcome objections from sales prospects! Because, indeed, objections are a positive sign — and they signal promising potential for a sale.

Objections, you see, are evidence of *interest*. Instead of reading an objection as a don't-waste-my-time message, look at it as a please-please-convince-me-to-buy plea. Chapter 13 spells out, step by step, how to prepare and respond to objections in a way that transforms that reluctant prospect into a satisfied customer.

Getting to yes

If you've ever read advice about job hunting, you no doubt discovered that you must always ask for the job — even if you're not certain you want it. The same holds true for making a sale . . . except for the part about not wanting it.



Oh sure, you can find all kinds of closing techniques and strategies that you may want to try — and I spell them all out in Chapter 14. But whatever technique reels in the prospect, you still want to ask for the sale. Always.

Looking on the no-sale bright side

By handling that rejection in the right way, you may earn yourself a client down the road, a glowing referral, or even a sale a lot sooner than you may expect. Although losing a sale can be a downer, you can tap into ways to turn this failure into a future success. Read Chapter 15 for some ways to use this rejection in a positive way.

Keeping Motivated

No matter where your sales career path takes you, staying motivated is critical to your success and growth. Motivation comes from within, but it must be nourished from the outside. Begin with an understanding of your values and your goals and maintain them through discipline, attitude, routine, habit, and further self-development.

Staying motivated is the picture of the Porsche (or resort in Tahiti, or mansion in Montana) tacked on your bulletin board. But it's also the checkmarks in your day planner, the commitment to your daily call schedule, and the hours of practice and rehearsing. In short, your ongoing motivation calls on efforts both grand and humble. (Check out Chapter 18 for how you can stay motivated.)