



## **Don't Hang Up! Skillful Selling Over the Phone**

More and more companies are opting for expanded outbound call centers for selling products than ever before. In fact, many buyers are indicating a preference for telephone sales calls over face-to-face interactions. There are three main reasons why phone selling has become a preferred method of selling:

1. Telephone selling is typically more time efficient than in-person sales calls
2. Phone sales are less intrusive to the buyer
3. Due to the decreased cost of sales to the supplier, customers can frequently enjoy better pricing options.

Here are some ideas to share with the telephone sales team in your organization:

T time your call effectively

E engage your customer by matching personality styles

L listen carefully to the customer's outgoing voice mail message

E employ a five step selling process

P present yourself professionally

H help your customer understand how you can assist him/her in meeting a need

O organize your call before you pick up the receiver to call out

N negotiate another time for the sales call, if it's an inconvenient time to talk

E expect to get voice mail 75% of the time

S send the message to the customer that you care about them and their business

A allow the customer to talk about their needs

L lead the customer through a pre-planned call questioning strategy

E enjoy the phone interaction with your customer

S simplify the sales process for your customer by making it easy to buy

**Timing your calls.** Some business people are more receptive to answering sales calls during certain times of the day. Discover when that is in your industry and plan accordingly. Also keep in mind when customers go to lunch. For example, in the Northeast, people usually take lunch from 1pm to 2. In the Southeast, noon to one is the preferred time. Make good use of before and after hours calls, too. Customers answer their phones and are more receptive to conducting business when the office is quieter.

**Engaging your customer.** Make an immediate judgement on the customer's personality style. If the person has high energy, match their style by talking faster, getting to the point without adding extraneous details, and put power into your voice by standing up. If the customer sounds more methodical, monotone and detailed, you may need to slow down, pace yourself more carefully, and add detailed information to the call. Matching

the customer's buyer style will serve you well by establishing quick rapport—increasing your likelihood of closing the sale!

**Listen carefully.** Again, keeping in mind the personality type, actively listening to the customer's outgoing voice mail message sends numerous messages about what type of person they are. Leave a message that mirrors their style and you'll be much more likely to receive a call back.

**Employ a five step sales process.** Welcome the customer through your introduction or referral, ask open ended needs-based questions, present your offerings, negotiate and handle objections, then close the call. Using this process—whether it's the first call or the twelfth call on the customer—provides you with a methodology that works in every situation.

**Present your best voice and presence.** On the telephone, 93% of your communication is in your tone of voice. That means you have to concentrate on your tone 100% of the time. Being tired, stressed, or hurried will come through in your voice *unless* you know how to control your tone to sound enthusiastic, energetic, and interested in your customer's needs.

**Help your customer.** Communicate that you truly care about your customer's problems and concerns. Assist the customer in making the right buying decision for their particular situation. Your true concern will come through in your voice and will result in more closed sales.

**Organize your call.** Have a call plan before dialing out. Know what you are going to discuss with the customer, how you want to sound, and what goals you want to accomplish in the call *before you pick up the phone!*

**Negotiate a better call time.** If it sounds like it's an inconvenient time to talk with a customer, than you're probably right. A hurried, frazzled, or stressed customer can't be engaged with an open mind. Arrange for a better time to have a quality sales conversation. Then the likelihood of your closing the sale will increase twenty fold!

**Expect to receive voice mail.** Research indicates that when you make a call, you'll reach voice mail 75% of the time. So be prepared for it. When you are expecting to reach "the box", have your voice mail message preplanned to get the customer's attention. This requires concentration on your part to actually *listen* to their outgoing message.

**Send a caring message.** Your customer can read your tone, so they can hear if you have a canned speech or memorized script that you are following. Make sure that you show concern, empathy, and a sincere desire to assist them.

**Allow your customer to talk.** Assuming you know what the customer wants is presumptuous. Engage the customer to find out about them. Ask good quality questions

to get the customer talking. Listen carefully not only to their words, but their **tone**, as well. (Remember the 93% rule?)

**Lead the customer.** By using the five step sales process as mentioned earlier, the customer will follow your path to answering your questions and listening to your presentation. It's just like a dance. Make sure you're leading!

**Enjoy the interaction.** Have some fun in your calls! Selling is an exciting profession as well as a gratifying one. Where else can you build long term relationships, solve people's problems, and make good money while you're doing it? People like to do business with those who enjoy their work.

**Simplify the process.** By making it easy for your customer to buy, you are shortening the sales cycle, reducing stress, and freeing up time to sell to another prospect. Figure out ways you can cut time by faxing or emailing contracts along with the proposal, providing materials to customers in anticipation of their needs, communicating follow up plans, and streamlining complicated processes.

So as you can see, TELEPHONE SALES is the way to sell into the new millennium.  
Happy Selling!

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