

# SALES EXCELLENCE

SALES EXCELLENCE EXPLORES THE BEST PRACTICES ON IMPROVING SALES EFFECTIVENESS BY IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS

## DIALING FOR DOLLARS

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## PROSPECTING

Prospecting is every salesperson's nightmare!

Isn't it funny just how heavy that phone can really be? Every salesperson is faced with the challenge of filling his pipeline and using the telephone is an essential component. It is something you should not only "get good" at, but is also wise to perfect. The more mature your territory, the more customers and orders there are to service. When this occurs, prospecting falls by the wayside and we justify why we don't have time to do it.

The lack of prospecting happens for many reasons. It is tedious, time consuming, and doesn't make us any money, at least not initially. And while it is true all that of these things get in the way mentally, over the long-term prospecting is what makes us the most money and provides a continuous tide of potential customers to keep our revenue stream flowing. *Dialing for Dollars* is a necessary evil that every salesperson must master and participate in regularly.

The ability to build a robust pipeline is highly predicated on how effective we are at building that network of potential clients. Several things can be done to improve your prospecting skills. There are several dynamics in play and understanding what you must do to be more effective in each area will get you more appointments and ensure greater success using the phone.

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## 10 THINGS TO HELP YOU PROSPECT MORE EFFECTIVELY

### **Mental Toughness**

Our thinking and mental state is critical. If you hate to do something, you procrastinate until the cows come home. If we hate to prospect, what do you think will happen? Prospecting is a state of mind, so change your thought process to *Dialing for Dollars*. This puts a positive spin on the mundane but otherwise important task that is difficult for most because it's just not fun.

### **Discipline**

Prospecting requires discipline. It's not how often you do it, it's how consistently you do it. Being disciplined requires focus. Build into your week time to prospect and protect it as you would a scheduled appointment with your most valuable client.

## **“I’m Too Busy”**

Or, “I have too many customers to handle.” This is a mental trap salespeople fall into and confuse activity with long-term success. You must build into your sales plan the process of developing long-term business. It takes anywhere from 18-24 months to develop a prospect into a full-blown client. Because most sales situations have a long sales cycle, it is imperative we prospect today so we can eat tomorrow. Anything less is being shortsighted. So quit making excuses and find a way to “chip away” at prospecting.

## **Develop a Compelling Statement**

Some people call this an “Elevator Speech” and some refer to it as your “30 Second Commercial.” Call it what you will, just do it. I prefer to call it a *Compelling Statement*. From my perspective, it truly must be compelling otherwise why would people want to talk to you. Your *Compelling Statement* has to differentiate you from the competition. What makes you special and unique? The customer wants to know “what’s in it for me?” Your *Compelling Statement* must move them to want to know more and ask for more. Merely stating “what” you do is not as interesting or important as “why” you do what you do.

## **Develop a Statement of Value**

Besides a Compelling Statement, you also need a *Statement of Value*. Remember that customers want to know “what’s in it for me?” and your *Statement of Value* speaks to that need. It helps the client or customer connect the dollar value, savings or ROI that might be achieved and makes them want to talk to you. In some circles it is described as your “Value Proposition”. Either way, customers expect “value” and the better you are at selling value, the less you will have to deal with price down the road.

## **Develop Your Script and Rehearse Your Lines**

Some salespeople have Compelling Statements and Statements of Value, but few execute them very well. Salespeople tend to have a hard time using the phone because they are not comfortable with the words they want to use and they don’t really know what it is they want to say. This is where much of sales call reluctance stems from. This prospecting barrier has a simple solution: develop a script. Actors rehearse their lines, pilots have a check list. Salespeople need a script which contains both your Compelling Statement and your Statement of Value. And then, just like an actor, rehearse your lines so the message flows over your lips just like a waterfall. You will be less tongue-tied if you rehearse and practice your lines.

## Handling Objections

Be prepared for the objections because they will come. And when they do, write them down. By developing responses to objections, you will be prepared to counter them the next time they come up.

## Staying Out of Voicemail Jail

Do not take this basic sales principle for granted; leaving an effective voice mail is critical to your success or you just might wind up in *Voicemail Jail!* Leaving the proper voice mail can mean the difference between returned calls or lost opportunities. There are different reasons and elements necessary to understand as it relates to leaving good voice mails. There are basically two purposes of leaving a voice mail in sales: one is to call as a way of introduction and hopefully secure an appointment (the prospecting side) and the other is to follow up either from a meeting or because they are already a client and you are trying to stay in front of the customer (the account management side).

It is important to remember that the sole purpose of voice mail is **NOT** to sell your products or services, it is to **get an appointment**. Obviously a key point to remember is that you are selling yourself, but other than that your objective is to create interest, get them to call you back and motivate the prospect to grant you an appointment.

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### 4 PRINCIPLES FOR LEAVING VOICEMAIL

There are 4 strategies for leaving voice mail which are all centered on motivating the prospect to talk to you. The example I use when I call a VP of Sales and Marketing is... "In my 20 years of doing business, I have found that 20-25% of an organization's sales force is underperforming and selling below quota." The response is always, "Yes, and this is possibly light."

To motivate your prospect you must provide:

1. Reasons worthy of calling back
2. Possibilities of benefits for them (WIFM – What's in it for me?)
3. Something of value
4. Proof of performance

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## RULES OF THE ROAD

### Rule #1 - Know the Prospect's Name and Title

If you really want to shoot yourself in the foot right from the start, do not be guilty of ignorance. Before you make that call make sure you know the correct pronunciation of their name of the person you are calling. Make sure you know his/her correct title and position in the company as well. If you are not sure of either or both, then place a call to the switchboard or administrative assistant to find out. Do not embarrass yourself by making your first call your last call.

### Rule #2 - Slow Down!

This is not a race to see how many words you can get out of your mouth in 60 seconds or less. Time and time again I have received voicemails where I couldn't understand the person's name and have had to play the recording back four times just to write down their number. The person on the other end shouldn't have to work at being able to get back to you. Make it easy for them to deal with you and the rest will fall in place.

### Rule #3 - Control the Conversation and You Control the Process

Regardless of which reason for leaving a voice mail, keep in mind you must maintain control of the process by controlling the communication and conversation. What I mean by this is when you leave a voice mail, and you end the voice mail by giving them your number and ask them to return your call, (and sometimes we even say something so ridiculous as; "at your convenience"), you have just given up complete control of the sales process and put the control of calling you back in the hands of your prospect or client by saying, "Mr. Prospect, whenever you have the time or the inclination, feel free to call me." You could wait for a lifetime. And a friendly word of advice; **don't hold your breath waiting for the call.**

So how do you stay in control? My preference is to say, "Mr. Prospect, when you have a moment to return my call my number is 222-222-2222, but due to the possibility that we'll wind up playing telephone tag and in the event you are unable to get back with me, I will try calling tomorrow between 2 and 4 to see if you are available to talk."

You accomplish three things:

- Take control of the process
- Show respect for their time
- Show commitment to follow up

Then when you do follow up, you confirm your sincerity and conscientiousness.

## Rule #4 - Make a Compelling Statement

The next important thing when leaving a voice mail is to make a "Compelling Statement" that sounds and hopefully is intelligent. It can't sound phony or make unrealistic claims. This is just as bad, if not worse, than relinquishing control of the conversation.

You may have heard the term what is your 30 second commercial or what is your elevator speech? Well I recommend if you have either or both and use either or both you quit using them immediately. Those concepts are old and out dated. There is a difference between a Compelling Statement and an Elevator Speech or a 30 Second Commercial.

**What is an example of a poor voice mail?** Salespeople customarily start off with something that sounds like this; "Good morning Mr. Jones. This is Ron Smith from XYZ. The reason for my call is to talk to you about some strategies I have for saving a million dollars by next Monday morning." Obviously, I am over exaggerating a little but I have heard some very bad voice mails in my career.

Or even worse, "Good morning Mr. Jones, This is Ron Smith from XYZ. I was wondering if I could show you a way to save \$50,000, would you give me a few moments of your time to show you how my company can do that for you?"

These are **NOT** "compelling statements". They are likely to turn them off or make them laugh, as they hear this same type of message again and again. It is not very likely to get you a return phone call. These are typical mistakes the rookie salesperson makes and some times even seasoned salespeople are guilty of making.

If you are guilty of leaving a voice mail that is remotely close, or asking the customer to call you back, it should now take **ALL** of the mystery out of your question; "I wonder why I haven't heard back from Mr. Jones?" At this point you have provided no basis or relevant information that allows them to assume you can do anything for them. In many cases it is timing, and unless they have a perceived need, and they usually don't, these old tried and true ways to leave a voice mail go unanswered.

**What is an example of a good voice mail?** A better statement might be about work you have done successfully for somebody else. A better approach might go like this, "Mr. Jones, my name is Ron Smith. The reason I am calling you today is that I have just completed a program for L & L Corporation that saved them (or increased for them) . . . over the past year. I would like to set an appointment to tell you how I did that and how I might be able to do something similar for you."

You are making a true statement about what you have done for someone else, you are up front about what it is you are asking for, the prospect's time. You create a meaningful basis of conversation based not on what you can do for the prospect but on what you have done for someone else. This kind of voice mail creates a realistic foundation for your future discussions with them.

**Rule #5 - Prepare a Statement of Value.** A "Statement of Value" speaks to your ability to fulfill the customer's needs. It helps the client or customer connect the dollar value, savings or ROI that might be achieved and makes them want to talk to you. In some circles it is described as your "Value Proposition". Either way, customers expect "value" and the better you are at selling value the less you will have to deal with price down the road.

### **Rule #6 - Prepare and go through a Telephone Checklist**

Next, you need a telephone checklist to prepare you. Pilots have a checklist before they take off. Do you have a flight plan for yourself before you pick up the phone? Having a well thought out game plan saves time and effort.

### **Dealing with the Gate-Keeper**

In your day-to-day activities you will come across gatekeepers and it is a good idea to have a strategy for dealing with them. Remember, gatekeepers do just that, and they will either open the gate or lock it depending on how you interact with them. [Request the article "Sally G and the Keys to the Kingdom" for more strategies on dealing with this critical part of the sales process.](#)

### **Develop Your List**

A list of potential prospects is critical and you can never have enough. There are many ways to obtain prospects. You can purchase lists from a service such as Hoover's or the Harris Directory,

you can use social networking sites such as LinkedIn, or you can use in-person networking. The point is to have a ready-made list of prospects to call during your regularly schedule call time. The article "Dig your Well before your Thirsty" can give you further insight on developing your list.

**GO FORTH AND SELL!**