



Friend or foe



Hard questions

# sales

## PROSPECTING:

Get twice the results in half the time

*"Great salespeople understand receptionists are their friends and can provide a wealth of information and assistance..."*

The most successful salespeople and businesspeople continuously prospect - they are new-business magnets. Moderately successful salespeople sometimes prospect and do it fairly well, while unsuccessful salespeople don't prospect at all or do it poorly.

Doesn't it make sense to improve your prospecting skills so you can achieve your goals in half the time? Here are a few proven techniques to help you make each prospect call more productive.

First, take steps to differentiate yourself and take business from your competition.

Be positive, passionate and sound confident. People want to do business with enthusiastic, confident people. This is twice as important on the phone.

You can sound more confident almost instantly by practicing and listening to the end of your sentences. When you make a statement such as, "Executive Training Consultants helps companies increase their closing ratios, average sales and bottom lines," your voice should go down at the end of the sentence. If your intonation goes up at the end, you sound like you're asking a question or are unsure. Practice will help you become more confident and produce better results.

Before you pick up the phone, dress for success. Even though your prospects can't see you, they can tell if you're not on top of your game and clothes help make you sound more confident. And don't forget your smile.

### *Receptionists are your friends*

Great salespeople understand receptionists

are their friends and can provide a wealth of information and assistance. Weak salespeople think of receptionists as foes or enemies. Here are a few ways to successfully obtain the help of countless receptionists

Introduce yourself. Ask the receptionist's name. Ask for her help in giving you the name of the person responsible for decisions regarding your type of service. "I was hoping you could help me. Could you give me the name of the person in charge of (purchasing office equipment) for your company?"

Ask for the spelling of the decision maker's name (this will help you with many phone systems), extension number, e-mail address and the best time to reach him. Finally, ask to be put through.

In you reach an assistant, remember an assistant's job is to save the boss time and avoid unimportant phone calls. What do you think the No. 1 "unimportant" phone call is in most bosses' minds? Yep, a sales call. So the most important thing you can do, or should I say not do, is sound like a salesperson. Use an assumptive voice (sounding confident as we discussed above) stating the name of the person you are calling and yours when asked. Your tone should be so confident that you imagine you are the largest client of this company and are surprised that this person doesn't know who you are. (Don't say all that of course, it's just your attitude.)

If you strike out with this strategy, call the decision maker before or after normal business hours or during lunch. You'll catch a bunch of these people at their desks while others are away. That's why it was so

important to get that contact information from your friend the receptionist.

When you get to the decision maker, introduce yourself. Without pausing, tell him if you were referred or are a customer. "John, I was referred to speak with you by Adam Stevens." (He is much less likely to brush you off if you were referred).

Quickly tell him you can help and include your track record so he sees value in investing time with you. Without pausing, engage your decision maker by asking a question that he is likely to answer with a yes. "Adam told me that you are the person responsible for increasing your sales team's performance. Is that correct?"

Continue to ask qualifying questions. If necessary, let him know there's no obligation to meet with you. Confirm a date and time for your appointment, ideally providing alternative-choice questions that have two positive answers. For example, "When is the best time for us to meet and discuss increasing your company's bottom line. Is Tuesday or Wednesday best?" Then follow with, "Is morning or afternoon best?"

When you are speaking with the decision maker, avoid wimpy expressions and words. Poor word choices include "I'd like to talk to you about ..." Instead, engage your prospect by replacing wimpy words with expressions or key words that matter to your prospect.

This is your 60 seconds in the spotlight. Your goal is to motivate or compel your prospect to move forward with you.

