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Cold Calling Success

15 Tactics for Getting the Appointment

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Cold Calling Success

**15 Tactics for Getting the
Appointment**

By

Victor Antonio

1st Edition

Sales Influence Publishing

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Victor Antonio, Founder of Sales Influence

From food stamps and welfare to being the CEO of a high-tech company, Victor Antonio is proof that the American dream of success is alive and well. A poor upbringing



in one of the roughest areas of Chicago didn't stop Victor from earning a B.S. in Electrical Engineering, then an MBA, and building a 20-year career as a top sales executive and manager.

Prior to being CEO, Victor was President of Global Sales and Marketing for a \$420M company and Vice President of International Sales in a Fortune 500 \$3B corporation. He was tasked with building a global sales force, establishing contract agreements, and developing financial pricing models. He also led the development of the corporate brand and marketed the company's services for worldwide acceptance. He was selected from over 500 sales managers to join the President's Advisory Council in 1999 and 2000 for excellence in sales and management.

He has conducted business in Europe, Asia, Australia, Latin America, the Caribbean, South Africa, and The Middle East.

Today, he trains salespeople to achieve quicker-selling results with his program **Sales Influence**. Victor is a dynamic speaker who specializes in taking apart complex subject matter and breaking it down to simple, applicable, everyday strategies for sales success. His workshops are loaded with sales strategies backed by research in the field of consumer behavior.

What makes this program different from others? **Sales Influence** isn't about "how to sell", but about "how people buy" and the thought processes that drive their decision-making behavior. When you understand how people buy, it's easier to sell to them. That's a new approach to selling!

For more information go to: www.SalesInfluence.com .

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Sales & Time Management

In the world of selling, there is one thing that will never change and that's prospecting. If you don't prospect (seek out new business clients), your business will eventually fail. There's no way around it. New clients equal new business equals growth. The formula for sales success couldn't be any clearer.

Prospecting is the engine that drives the sales in your business and unless you keep that engine tuned up and running efficiently, it'll start sputtering, making weird noises, and eventually will break down. And like any car, when the engine stalls, it doesn't matter how pretty the car is or how much money you spent to own it, it's not going anywhere. So, too, will your career in sales if you're not out there banging away trying to drum up new business.

As someone once told me, you can have the finest of clothes, the best sales gear and script that money can buy, but unless you have a well-maintained prospecting engine, all the above doesn't matter.

In 2003, Tim Connor published a book called Soft Selling. In it, he compared how poor salespeople and successful salespeople managed their selling time differently. He allocated the salesperson's time into six major categories:

- Prospecting
- Sales Presentation
- Service
- Administration
- Travel
- Self-Improvement

He found that when it came to time management, poor salespeople allocated their time as follows:

- 10% on prospecting,
- 23% on sales presentation,
- 15% on service to others,
- 30% on administration,
- 20% on travel,
- and a meager 2% on self-improvement.

These numbers are stunning at first glance if you believe and take Connor's numbers seriously. Note that only 10% of a salesperson's time was being spent on

prospecting and a whopping 30% of their time was being spent on administrative duties. In other words, the salespeople who failed were spending more time managing their paperwork and administrative duties than managing or growing their sales pipeline¹.

Now, when you hear the phrase “sales pipeline”, this is just a metaphor for describing the quantity of potential buyers you’re currently working with on closing a sale. The goal of every salesperson is to make sure that the sales pipeline is always full of potential buyers we lovingly refer to in the sales industry as “suspects”.

What’s the difference between a “suspect” and a “prospect”? Well, when you meet someone for the first time, you should refer to them as a suspect. You don’t know much about them and you don’t know if they’re even a potential buyer. But, once you’ve qualified the buyer as a likely candidate for your product or service through some form of investigative questioning process, you can then refer to them as a prospect.

¹ Many sales training programs today also contribute to this problem when they require salespeople to fill out loads of paperwork to help management track sales pipelines. While documentation is never a bad thing, sales managers must strike a balance if they want to keep the salesperson productive in the field and not behind a desk.

The name of the sales game is turning “suspects” into “prospects” as quickly as possible and keeping the sales pipeline full. The sooner you learn how to qualify a potential buyer, the less time you waste on suspects who won’t buy.

But let me get back to the numbers. Again, only 10% of a poor salesperson’s time was being spent on prospecting. It’s no wonder their sales were falling short of their expectations and their sales pipeline remained empty. They were spending more time on paperwork and presentations when they should have been out looking for new suspects to qualify.

Contrast these numbers with how well successful people managed their time when it came to selling. Connor found that good salespeople spent their time as follows:

- 45% on prospecting for new business,
- 10% on their sales presentation,
- 20% on service to others,
- 5% on administration,
- 10% on travel,
- and 10% on self-improvement.

What a difference! Let's walk through these numbers slowly because there is much to learn here about the habits of successful salespeople compared to those less fortunate.

- Poor salespeople spent 10% of their time prospecting while successful people spent almost 5 times that amount, 45% of the time, prospecting for new business.
- While poor salespeople spent 30% of their time doing administrative paperwork, successful salespeople only spent 5%.
- While poor salespeople spent only 2% on self-improvement, the top sales performers spent 10% of their time on personal development and growth.
- And if you're reading this book or listening to this audio series, consider yourself among those successful salespeople who are working on that 10% for personal development and growth!

In an earlier study done in 1987 by Stephan Schiffman of DEI Management and the author of Cold Calling Techniques That Really Work, the emphasis on prospecting seemed to be the key to sales success. Over a ten year period, Schiffman studied top sales' earners who were earning between \$75,000 and \$100,000 a year. He

found that the top sales earners spent 45% of their time prospecting, 20% of their time was spent on presentation skills, another 20% was spent on product knowledge, and 15% of their time was spent on upgrading their sales training skills.

If we look at both studies by Connor and Schiffman, it's obvious that for a salesperson to be successful, almost half, or 45% of their time, has to be spent on prospecting for new clients and 10% to 15% of their time should be spent on continuously improving their selling skills.

One can conclude from these two studies that these two tasks, the power of prospecting and the need for continuous self improvement, are the main support beams for any successful sales career.

If we believe these two studies (and there's no reason not to), then the linchpin for sales success is predicated on your ability to pick up that phone, make the call, and find someone who will listen to our sales pitch. If that's the case, then why is it that the majority of salespeople don't do it?

Sales Call Reluctance

Many people (maybe you're one of them), find it difficult to pick up the phone and call. This "disease" or phone phobia or inability to muster up the courage to call someone we've never met has a name. It's called "sales call reluctance". I'd like to take a moment and talk about sales call reluctance because only by understanding this fear and facing it head on, can you hope to overcome your own personal sales call reluctance.

As children, we're told never to talk to strangers. Some of our parents told us to not speak unless we were spoken to. When we heard the word "no", it was usually associated with an experience that made us feel bad, which is why we automatically associate the word "no" with negative feelings.

In my sales training program, I discuss the Rule of Association. This rule is about how we, as humans, tend to use past related experiences to drive and motivate how we think and feel in a given situation. So, when we are required to make cold calls (i.e., talk to strangers) and

there's a high probability that they'll reject our offer (i.e., say "no"), we can see why the thought of picking up the phone can be quite a turn-off. Anyone who says they "love" cold calling is either a liar or a rare bird indeed (such as the extinct Dodo Bird!).

I'm trying to drive home the point that sales call reluctance is not specific to you. It's natural; it's human; there's nothing wrong with you. We all have that fear of picking up a phone and calling someone we've never met. The fact that everyone is afraid tells us that sales call reluctance and the feelings associated with it are normal; which means you're normal!

Yet, how is it that some people are able to overcome that fear and get on the phone and make the phone calls?

- a) Is it because they are fearless?
- b) Is it because they love cold calling?
- c) Is it because they have some weird propensity to want to talk to strangers?
- d) None of the above.

I'll go with answer d). Cold callers clearly understand that without prospecting, their hopes of achieving sales success

for their business won't happen. Successful salespeople fear cold calling, but they fear the possibility of not being able to be financially independent that much more. Cold calling is the lesser of the two evils.

My wife helped me crystallize this concept some time ago. When I quit corporate America and decided to go it alone and to build my own speaking business, it was hard. It was no easy task trying to drum up business, especially over the phone. In fact, I reached a point where I just wanted to give up. I was having one of those days in my life where I just felt like throwing in the towel and saying, "To hell with it! I'm done!" Everyone I called just kept tossing me into voicemail, not answering their phone, or even worse. When I did leave a message, they didn't return my calls. I was at the end of my rope. I felt frustrated and as if I was going nowhere fast. In short, I felt demoralized and my motivation to continue was at an all-time low. Perhaps you've been there?

I then did what many of us do so often when things aren't going our way --- we find someone who'll listen to our aches and pains about how the world really stinks at times and how everything seems to be against us. I told my wife that I was tired of cold calling and that I simply hated

it. Yes, I HATED COLD CALLING! I didn't want to do it anymore. Then my wife, in a calm voice, made the statement that was to set the tone for every future call I would make from that day forward. She calmly looked at me and said, "Do you hate cold calling more than going back to work for someone else?" When I heard those words, my mental gears locked up and my mind came to a screeching halt! Let me repeat those powerful words again. She said, "Do you hate cold calling more than going back to work for someone else?"

Talk about a loaded question and an in-your-face response. I didn't know how to answer the question. I honestly don't remember if I said anything back to her, but I do remember walking back to my office and picking up the phone once more. I do remember telling myself that going back to work for someone else or not being financially independent was a far worse outcome than getting on the phone and making those cold calls. And the rest, as they say, is cold calling history. The phone that was once the specter of rejection became my lightning rod for financial independence. I saw the phone as my instrument of liberation to help me achieve personal success.

Think about your current situation. Think about the job you have today. Think about your financial position. Think about how unhappy you are today doing what you're doing. If all this adds up to pain and discontent, then cold calling, prospecting for business, is going to be easy compared to what you have happening in your life right now! Being afraid to cold call is a natural aversion that we all have. So, I'll ask you the same question my wife asked me, but in a different way. "What do you fear most --- never pursuing your passion and continuing to live a life of quiet desperation or cold calling? Are you willing to make the cold calls that can lead to financial independence?"

If you're like me, it's the latter. So, let's start talking about how you're going to get on that phone and make things happen for you.

Persistence by the Numbers

One of the questions I'm often asked at my seminars is, "How many times should I call before I give up and move on to the next one?" That's a tough question to answer. Sometimes you can talk to a potential buyer and know immediately if there's a fit or not for the product you're selling. In some cases, the answer is obvious after one call. Good salespeople who truly believe in what they're selling will tell you that sometimes you need to be persistence because buyers may not understand the benefit of what you are selling. So, the answer may be to make as many sales calls as you deem necessary until you find someone that will listen.

In doing some research, I ran across an interesting study done by the National Sales Executive Association that I'd like to share with you that might help us solve the "how many times should I call" dilemma. The study outlines how many sales calls the average salesperson makes to get the deal. In this study, they found that:

- 2% of sales are made on the 1st call

- 3% of sales are made on the 2nd call
- 5% of sales are made on the 3rd call
- 10% of sales are made on the 4th call
- 80% of sales are made on the 5th call

If 80% of the sales are made on the 5th call, it begs the question, “How many salespeople actually make that 5th call?” The study found that:

- 48% of salespeople quit after the 1st call
- 25% quit after the 2nd call
- 12% quit after the 3rd call
- 5% quit after 4th call
- 10% made that 5th call or more

Let me highlight two very important points in this study. First, it says that 80% of the sales are made on the 5th call or more. It also shows that almost 75% of the salespeople gave up after the second phone call. Is this good news or bad news? This is great news for you! If almost 75% of your competition drops out by the second phone call, just by making that third call or more, you have less competition to contend with! So, being persistent can pay off big.

But They Don't Call Back

Another common concern I hear at my workshops is, "I called them, but they haven't called me back". Or if they did meet with the client, I hear, "I had a great meeting, but they haven't called me back."

Here are some key things to keep in mind the next time you are sitting around wondering and waiting for a client to call you back. Fifty percent of all the key points you made in your product pitch or presentation will be forgotten within one week. If I were to guess, I'd say 80% to 90% of your key points are probably forgotten within two weeks of your presentation.

Many salespeople who are emotionally tied to their product superimpose their enthusiasm on their client. They believe that just because they themselves think it's a great product that the client will AND should feel the same way. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Clients today are inundated with product pitches and advertising messages. They're on information overload and you're just another commercial added on top. Think about your own personal situation. How many calls from solicitors do you get in a day? How many e-mails do you get per day? How much spam mail do you get? When

you watch television, how many commercials are inserted in an hour? Get the idea?! It's not that the client doesn't need what you have to sell. Prospects just don't have the mental bandwidth to absorb everything that's being thrown at them.

Some studies even show that even if you did get in to see them and made your product presentation, clients who were likely to buy after the presentation will lose their enthusiasm within one week. This point is worth repeating. *Clients who are likely to buy after a presentation will lose their enthusiasm within one week.* This means that if you do meet with a client, your window of opportunity is one week, maybe two at best.

If you met with a client and they haven't called back, that's not good. If the client told you they'd think about your proposal before making a decision, I can assure that he or she will think about it for only as long as you are in the same room. Once you leave, the client will give it minimal thought and within a few days your presentation and information will be relegated to the mental trash bin.

So, keep in mind that once you walk out of that meeting, the impact of your presentation has a "temporary effect". Once you leave, the clock has started and your

presentation fades with every passing day. The best time to close a deal is right there and then, when you're face-to-face with a client.

Studies and personal experiences have shown that getting a face-to-face meeting with a potential client will dramatically increase your chances of closing a sale. Later on, I'm going to show you how you're going to get those face-to-face meetings with your client.

Three Types of Prospects

Prospects fall into three general categories:

- Buyer Initiated
- Referral
- Seller Initiated

When a sales call is “buyer initiated”, that means the buyer has reached out to you to inquire about your product or service. All of us in sales would love to be in a position where our prospects come to us. If you’re in that position today, where buyers are contacting you, great! But if you’re like the rest of us, more often than not we have to go out and find the buyer. A “buyer initiated” scenario is an easier sale because there is low sales resistance and high sales acceptance since the buyer knows what he wants.

Let me stop here for a moment to explain what I mean by “sales resistance” and “acceptance”. Before any sale can occur, you as a salesperson have to reduce the client’s resistance to buying your product. The resistance can come in the form of mistrust of you, the salesperson, or simply the fact that they are unfamiliar with your company

or products. In this scenario, it is your job to reduce that resistance BEFORE you begin selling them on your product. The rule of thumb here is that you must first reduce sales resistance before sales acceptance (i.e., buying into your product) can occur. Sales acceptance is created during the sales process when you establish good rapport with the client, demonstrate your understanding of the client's needs, and provide a solution that will benefit the client.

So, back to a buyer initiated call. When a buyer initiates the call, they may have already done the research on your company and product and are well prepared when they contact you. These are buyers who know what they want and are looking for the right person to buy it from. So, in a buyer initiated scenario, there is low sales resistance because they're familiar with you or your product and high sales acceptance is already there because they know what they want. Again, life in sales would be good if we had buyers coming to us.

The next type of buyer is a "referral", also known as a "warm lead". If you can get a client to give you the name of another potential buyer, this makes cold calling that much easier. In this scenario, the referral (the person

whom you're calling) will have some sales resistance because they don't know you personally, but they will also have some sales acceptance since you came highly recommended from a trusted friend or associate.

For any salesperson, one of the keys to keeping your sales pipeline filled is to get referrals from existing friends or satisfied clients. This is a key resource for generating new prospects for any salesperson and should not be underestimated. In fact, I'll go as far as to say that getting referrals is how many of the best salespeople stay on top.

The first type of prospect is a "buyer initiated" prospect who comes to satisfy some need. In this case, the sales resistance is low and sales acceptance is high.

The second type is the one we just discussed, "referrals". Here, the prospect has some sales resistance since there isn't a personal connection or need established. However, the prospect also has some sales acceptance since you were referred to that person by a personal friend or respected colleague.

The third type of prospect is the most difficult of all and will be the focus of this series on prospecting, the "seller initiated" prospect. As the name implies, a seller

initiated prospect is someone you call on as a salesperson. In this scenario, since the seller will initiate the contact, the unsuspecting prospect will have high sales resistance since he doesn't know you and there is no trust established or familiarity with your product. The prospect may also be unaware of any need for your product. In other words, when you contact someone out of the blue, or "cold call", they don't know who you are, what you represent, or even know if they need what you're offering. It's no surprise that there is high sales resistance and low sales acceptance when making cold calls.

A "seller initiated" prospect is an uphill climb, but not an impossible feat. When you're calling on someone for the first time without the benefit of any sort of introduction, you, the seller, are at a disadvantage. But if you think about it, if it weren't for "seller initiated" prospects --- the seller having to go out and find new clients --- the profession of selling wouldn't exist.

So, there you have it. A "buyer initiated" prospect is one in which a prospect approaches you with a need. In this case, we have low sales resistance and high sales acceptance making this scenario the ideal sales situation. A "referral" scenario is where someone they know refers

them to you. In this case, there is some resistance since there isn't a personal connection yet, but there is some sales acceptance since you came highly recommended. Again, if you can get your business to the point where you can depend on referrals, you'll be in a great position to achieve your sales goals. And lastly, there is the "seller initiated" prospect. By far, this is the toughest of all three scenarios and the main focus of a good salesperson. Since it is the salesperson that is initiating contact with someone who doesn't know you or your company and may not be interested in what you have to offer, the sale is that much more difficult.

The best way to sell someone who doesn't know who you are is by getting in front of them. I'm convinced that you can't sell to someone you don't know unless you have some face-time and allow them to get to know you and your product.

My goal here is to focus on the toughest of all three prospect types, the "seller initiated" prospect. I'm going to show you several sales tactics you can use to get those face-to-face meetings. If you can increase the number of times you can get in front of a prospect, your chances of selling to them will increase exponentially.

Step 1: Having an Intro

Before you pick up the phone, the one thing you must have is a written and/or memorized introduction of yourself and the company. Many salespeople try to “wing it” when they get on the phone talking about themselves and their company. Experience has taught me that the best approach is to develop an introduction script of what you want to say upfront.

I’ve had salespeople tell me that reading from a script makes them sound too mechanical and that it just doesn’t work. I would agree, but only if the person hasn’t rehearsed it enough to make it their own.

Speaker and Trainer Kurt Mortensen said something interesting regarding a script. When saying the words from your script, he asked his audience this question, “Are you singing the words or are you singing the song?” It’s an interesting analogy. Have you ever seen a person who doesn’t know the words to the song they’re singing? If you have, you probably noticed that it didn’t sound natural.

If you like to karaoke, I'm sure you've seen folks who, not knowing the words to a particular song, have to read the words off the television screen making them sound robotic. The end result is that they sound off-key and off-tempo. That's exactly what will happen to you if you try to read an introduction script over the phone without proper practice and preparation. True professional salespeople know that the key to sounding natural is memorizing the words you have to say, add tone and voice inflection where appropriate, and adjust your verbal speed to match the prospects. When you can do this, you're singing the song, not just singing the words.

Let's go ahead and construct an introduction for you that will fit your personality and style. Every introduction starts out with a polite greeting of who you are and what your company offers. For example:

“Good afternoon. My name is (Fill in the Blank) with ABC company.”

If you know the person's name, you can insert it at the beginning.

“Good morning, Bob. My name is (Fill in the Blank) with ABC company.”

You then need to add the benefit statement of why you're calling. The benefit statement basically tells the prospect what value you can bring to their company if they choose to do business with you. For example:

"We're a sales training company that helps salespeople increase their closing rates by 20%."

Or,

"We're a widget manufacturing company that help companies, like yours, reduce their overall production cost by 20%."

Let's remind ourselves that any client you have, independent of industry, wants to know one of two things from anyone trying to sell them:

1. How can you help me make money or better yet, help me make more money?
2. Or, how can you help me save money or reduce my costs?

If you can provide an answer to one or both of these questions, then the chances of securing a face-to-face meeting will dramatically improve. It's imperative that you have it clear in your mind how you can help the prospect make money or save money and let the potential buyer know that early in the introduction. It's that simple!

The third part of the introduction is the request, which is the real objective of your phone call. If your objective is to secure a face-to-face meeting, then you have to insert that question into your intro.

For example:

“Mr. Prospect, I think we should get together so I can demonstrate to you how we can help you save (or make) money. How does next Monday sound?”

As you can see, you have to get right to the point of what you want. Now, you may be thinking, “Wow, that’s pretty direct and bold!” To which I would reply, “Absolutely!” Look, you don’t have time to waste. The only way you stand a snowball’s chance in hell to make the sale is by getting in front of them. Anything short of that should be considered a waste of time and effort for you and the prospect. So, ask for the meeting!

There you have it; the three parts to a well-planned cold call:

- The Greeting
- The Benefit
- The Request

Let’s put all three pieces of the intro together and see how it sounds.

“Good afternoon. My name is (fill in the blank) with ABC company. We’re a sales training company helping salespeople increase their closing rates by 20%. Mr. Prospect, I think we should get together so I can show you how we can help your company boost sales (or make more money). How does next Monday sound?”

Or:

“Good morning, Bob. My name is (fill in the blank) with ABC company. We’re a widget manufacturing company that will help companies like yours reduce production costs by 20%. Bob, I think we should get together so that I can demonstrate how we can help save you money. How does next Monday sound?”

I want you to take a moment and write your own introduction. I know, it’s going to feel a bit awkward not only writing it out, but saying it aloud. Nonetheless, write out your introduction and then repeat it over aloud until you start to feel comfortable with how you’re saying it.

The Introduction:

The Benefit:

The Request:

At first, just try to get the right words down on paper and then you can do some wordsmith work and get everything

in the proper sequence. With enough practice, the introduction will begin to sound more natural as you insert your personality and speaking style.

I'm going to ask you to be patient with this process. You won't like the way it will sound the first few times. Many of us hate the sound of our own voice, but it's not as bad as you think. Practice your intro and work on the word sequence of what to say and then how to say it. Then, the next time someone asks you, "What do you do?", instead of fumbling for the right words, your intro will flow out of your mouth naturally. Don't be surprised if you find yourself thinking, "Man, that sounded good! I can't believe I said that."

Step 2: Having an Objective

Step 2 in the process of making successful sales calls is having a clearly defined objective. The objective has to be specific in order for you to be able to measure or gauge your success. If you're making fifty calls a day, but you're calling on the wrong people, then your cold calling adventures will be in vain. In fact, many people who claim cold calling doesn't work do just that --- call on the wrong people. Whatever product or service you're selling, the first part of the objective is to define who you're calling on and what you'd like to get from the call. For example, let's say that you've identified the person or persons within a company who will buy what you are selling. Maybe you're trying to reach the vice president of sales because, based on previous experience or the success of others, you know that's the person who can make a buying decision. Once you've identified the person, what's your goal? If you get this person on the phone, what are you going to ask for? What is it that you're trying to accomplish with this call?

Now you may be thinking, “Well, I just want them to buy from me!” That’s not a goal; that’s your desire. Big difference! Unless you’re in telemarketing, the chances of someone buying your product sight unseen will be quite a stretch.

In my seminars, when I ask people what their goals are when they’re calling a prospect, I usually get an array of answers that sound something like this:

- I just want to gather information;
- I want to build rapport over the phone and start a relationship;
- I want to get to know their management team;
- I want to understand how the organization works;
- I want to learn more about how the buying process works;
- Or, the big one, I want to introduce them to our company and what we offer.

These objectives are fine, but they won’t help you move closer to making a sale. These objective are very vague and don’t require the prospect to make any commitment to advancing the sale.

Let's talk about the difference between advancement objectives versus continuation objectives.

Continuation objectives are those I've already mentioned:

- Gather information from the client
- Understand how the buying process works
- Build a relationship

These are vague objectives that will do nothing to move or advance the sale. What you need to do is define upfront your advancement objectives that will move you one step closer to closing the deal.

Let's walk through a brief example. If you're making a cold call, an advancement objective may be to first locate the right person who can make a decision. Once identified, assume that you're now talking with that person. Then, the next stage in the advancement objective would be to get a face-to-face meeting with that person. In selling, we know that if we can get in front of a prospect, our chances of selling them our product will increase dramatically. Later on I'm going to show you how to go about getting an appointment with your prospective buyer.

Once in the meeting or appointment and having presented your product, your next advancement objective should be to either close the sale or advance the sale further

by submitting some type of pricing proposal along with an agreed upon time to follow-up. Once the pricing proposal is submitted, you follow up with a call or better still, a face-to-face meeting to close the deal. This is the final step in the advancement objectives.

Each step in the sales process I just discussed is geared at reducing the sales cycle (in other words, speeding up the sales process and closing the deal as quickly as possible). Too often, salespeople who have no set objectives when they meet with a client are left with lingering deals that never seem to get closed. If you don't set up sales objectives, you too will find yourself with deals that seem to linger on forever and your chances of winning the deal lessen.

Your goal is to get to a "yes" or "no" as quickly as possible. You don't have time to spend waiting around for people to make a decision. Experience has taught me that if you give a client a month to think about it, they'll take that whole month, but won't think about it. You then spend another two or three weeks trying to contact that person. When you finally do and ask them if they've considered your proposal, don't be surprised if you hear something that goes along this line: "We've been really busy and I haven't

had time to give your proposal any thought.” Translation: “It wasn’t compelling enough for me to consider since we last talked.” This statement is usually followed up with a, “Can you give me a call next week and maybe we can talk about it then?” You say, “Sure, sounds good.” This sequence of events is a perfect description of a sale that is in continuation mode and not in advancement mode. This isn’t a good position for any salesperson to be in. It’s like the engine is running, but it is just idling --- there is no forward motion, no getting it in gear!

But I’m getting ahead of myself. The point I wanted to make here is that when you call a prospect, you need to have a clear, defined goal of what you want from that phone call. If you want a face-to-face meeting, then that’s what you ask for. If you’re unclear and you don’t ask for a commitment of some sort to advance the sale, you’re going to find yourself playing telephone tag with a prospect who, in the end, has no intention of buying. This means you’ve just wasted valuable time that you can’t get back.

Remember, you only have so much time in a week. Your goal is to call as many prospects as you can and pick out those that show a sincere interest, at a minimum,

in considering your product. If your goal is to get the prospect to agree to a face-to-face meeting, then ask for that meeting and be as specific as possible as to when you want it to happen. If the client says “no”, then guess what -- move on! Getting a rejection upfront may not be pleasant, but it’ll save you a lot of time, headache, and heartache, which is why I’m always grateful when I get rejected upfront.

You may be thinking, “How can you be grateful that they rejected you upfront?” Well, think of the alternative. What if they had me come into their office for a face-to-face meeting and had me then follow up only to be told four weeks later that they really never had any intention of buying from me or that they couldn’t afford to buy. Talk about a waste of time, money, and effort! That is why the faster you get to a decision, yes or no, good or bad, the better off you are going to be in the long run.

So, Step 2 is to know who your calling on in advance and have a specific phone call objective to advance the sale. In this case, I’m going to suggest that the best objective to have when contacting a prospect for the first time is to secure a face-to-face meeting with that

person. In a sense, your first sale is to sell the prospect on the idea of meeting with you. Sort of selling yourself.

A gentleman by the name of Victor Lue-Yat, CEO of DocuGreen, a company that specializes in the secure disposal or storage of sensitive documents, said it best at one of my seminars. “If I can get in front of a client, our close rate is 80%. The trick is getting the appointment.” Mr. Lue-Yat understood how critical it was to get in front of the client to close more deals.

Step 1 is developing an Introduction and Step 2 is developing a clear cut objective of what it is you want from the phone call. In this case, the objective is to get an appointment or meeting with the decision maker. Then, the next step is to learn how to do just that.

Step 3: Scripts for Getting the Appointment

Okay. We have our intro down and we know what the call objective is --- GET THE MEETING! When you call someone to set up a meeting, let's assume that this is a Seller Initiated call, where the sales resistance is going to be high and sales acceptance low. The key is convincing the prospect over the phone in a short period of time to agree to meet with you.

In many instances, the immediate reaction of the prospect will be to say "no" to the possibility of meeting with you. Don't be discouraged. Welcome to the world of selling where the word "no" is commonplace. You have the prospect on the line, you've stated the reason for your phone call using your prepared introduction, you've asked for the face-to-face meeting, and they say "no". What next? Here is where you're going to turn those "nos" into "yeses" by using what I call "Quick Flips". When you get a prospect on the phone and you ask for a meeting, they're going to try to give you the brush-off. Some will agree to

meet with you, but more often than not, you're going to get some reason or excuse of why it isn't worth their time to do so.

What I'd like to teach you now is how to turn those "nos" into "yeses" by using a tactic I call the QUICK FLIP. Quick flips are a way of turning their "no" into the very reason why you should meet with them. Whatever excuse the prospect throws at you, you use that very excuse to establish a reason for why they should meet with you.

Let's start with the most common of all brush-offs that most of us have to face at one time or another.

Brush-Off Number 1 is when a client tells you after you've requested the meeting,

"I'm not interested."

When most salespeople hear this response, the automatic reaction is to say, "Okay" and hang up the phone. Instead of doing that, try this quick flip:

"A lot of people have that initial reaction when I first call before they've have a chance to see how this could benefit them, which is why we should to get together. How does (date/time) sound?"

Notice that I'm focused like a laser on trying to get that meeting.

Brush-Off Number 2: How many of you, when cold-calling a prospect, hear,

"I'm too busy right now; I don't have time!"

Here's how you're going to flip that excuse into a reason for having a meeting.

"Mr. Prospect, I can appreciate how busy you are right now. The only reason I was calling was to set up a time for us to meet when you're not so busy. Would (date/time) be good for you?"

Notice that all you're doing is using their reason for not wanting to meet with you as the very reason they should.

Brush-Off Number 3:

I hear this one a lot. It's a prospect favorite.

"Just fax me the info."

Or simply,

"Just send me the info and I'll review it and keep it on file."

Now, if you're like me when I first started out in sales, I was naïve enough to believe that they really wanted info so

they could review it. So, I would stuff my brochures into an envelope, take it to the post office to mail, and then wait a week before I followed up. The results? I usually heard one of the following excuses:

- *“I never received it. Could you send it again?”*
- *“I haven’t looked at the information. Call me in another week or so.”*

Or my all time favorite,

- *“Who are you again?”*

Yes, after asking for the information, many of my prospects simply didn’t recall talking to me in the first place. Let’s get real for a second here. What do you think are the chances of that person actually reviewing the info even if you did send it to them? Not very good. Clients will oftentimes say anything to get you off the phone. Even when I did resend the information, trying to get the person on the phone again to confirm the receipt of the info was almost impossible.

What’s the bottom line here? Sending a cold-calling prospect your info in almost all cases is a waste of time. The best thing to do is to hand deliver it. If they’re serious about wanting to take a look at what you have to offer to help them make money or save money, they’ll

make the time to meet with you. So, how do you respond to that? Try this quick flip:

“Mr. Jones, you know as well as I do that by the time it gets faxed (or arrives), it’ll be forgotten. Let me stop by and spend just a few minutes showing you (benefit). How does (date and time) sound?”

Brush-Off Number 4:

“I don't have the budget for anything right now.”

This type of response is really hard to respond to. The best you can do is to say the following:

“I understand. Many of my clients tell me the same thing. I just want to show you how we can (here’s where you reiterate the benefit that you offer) down the road. How does (date/time) sound?”

Here’s a sales influence tip on getting the client to say “yes” to your request. Studies have shown that when you ask someone for a commitment, (in this case to meet with you), the farther the date is into the future, the more likely the person is to say “yes”.

This advice makes complete sense when you think about it. We’ve all been in situations in our personal lives when a friend or family member asked us to do something

that was a few weeks or a month off. For example, your brother says to you, “Bill, I’m moving out in three months. When I do, you think you can stop by and help?” Because the date is so far in the future, your natural response would be to say “yes”. When asking a prospect for a commitment date for a meeting, keep this in mind. If I called you and asked you for a meeting either for tomorrow or next week, which one would you choose? If you’re like most, it’ll probably be the next week.

Brush-Off Number 5:

This is where the prospect responds to your request for a meeting by saying,

“You’ll be wasting your time if you pitch me your product.”

What the client is saying is, “No matter what you’re going to tell me, I’m going to say ‘no’”. I’ve seen many a salespeople holster their phones quickly when they hear this brush-off. But here’s how you’re going to flip that excuse.

“You may be right. Let’s find out. How does (time/date) sound?”

Now, this response is so quick and to the point that you will literally catch your prospect off guard. Don't be surprised if you hear some stuttering or maybe even an uncomfortable silence. This quick flip is powerful and yes, dare I say, BOLD! You have to have some real guts to use this one. But don't be surprised if the client coughs up a date; be prepared to write it down.

If this quick flip is too aggressive for your style, try this softer flip:

“Many of my other clients thought the same thing, which is why we should get together. How does (time/date) sound?”

You decide which one fits your personality and style best. I'm of the philosophy that you have to be comfortable with and believe in what you're saying or it won't work and the prospect will sense it.

Brush-Off Number 6:

If the prospect on the phone senses you're trying to sell him or her, you might here a terse response like:

“You're just trying to sell me!”

I have to confess that I personally didn't have a good, solid response to this statement until I read Steve Schiffman's

book called Cold Calling Techniques That Work. His quick flip is definitely one that you should store in your mental hard drive. When a client accuses you and says, “You’re just trying to sell me!” try this quick flip:

“I only want to sell you if it’ll benefit you and the only way to find out is for us to get together. How does (date time) sound?”

This flip is so powerful because not only does it turn the excuse into a reason for meeting, but because it also transmits a sense of caring. In other words, you’re telling the client that you don’t want to sell them unless there is a clear benefit for them in doing so. Very powerful stuff!

Here’s another sales influence tip that will help increase your appointment rate. When you ask for a meeting, let the client know that your time is very tight. In your request for a meeting, find a way to insert that you only have so many dates or time slots available. For example, when you ask for a meeting, you can add something like:

“Will Monday at 3 p.m. be good or my next available time is Friday at 10 a.m. Which would be best for you?”

This transmits to the client that:

- You're a busy person,
- You must have something good to sell since you're that busy, and
- Others are buying so maybe they should take a look.

The mistake a lot of new salespeople make is to say something like,

“Well, you can choose any date next week. I'm wide open.”

To a client, that's not a very comforting feeling and creates some doubt as to how good or in-demand your product or service really is. So, when asking the prospect for a meeting, have specific times and dates so they know you mean business.

Brush-Off Number 7:

This is a very common brush-off and possibly the one salespeople run into the most. In today's economy, there's a lot of competition, so it should come as no surprise to hear a prospect say,

“We're currently using someone else and we're happy.”

This brush-off sends many a salesperson off the rails. Many, upon hearing this brush-off, will immediately try to

probe and find out who the competition is. The problem is that you are in no position to be asking the prospect, (who doesn't know you from Adam), who they use or how they conduct their business. In fact, by questioning the prospect on who they currently use as a supplier, you are only reinforcing their position about not using an outsider. The best way to nullify this brush-off is to embrace the fact that they are using someone else and redirected them in a way that doesn't come across as competitive. Try this quick flip:

“Great. In talking to other companies similar to yours, we found that our products are a good complement to what you're using. Now, I'm convinced we should get together. How does (date/time) sound?”

If you decide to use this quick flip, be sure that what you're saying is true and that your product is indeed complementary. If the client calls you on it and asks you to explain how that's possible, you better be prepared and have a good answer. If not, your credibility will be shot to pieces.

What if you're product isn't complementary and the products that they are currently using are in direct

competition with yours? This is something we all run into all the time. If that's the case, try using this quick flip:

“That’s good to hear. Other companies who use that product told us the same thing. But they also told us that having an option in case of an emergency is always a good thing, which is why we should get together. How does (date/time) sound?”

In this case, you're taking the competition head-on by telling the prospect that you understand that they are happy and you're not challenging it. But at the same time, you're playing to their fears by reminding them that one should never put all their eggs in one basket.

In business, I heard a saying that went something along these lines: “If you're not number one with a client, then position yourself to be number two because eventually the leader will falter and you want to be next in line to reap the rewards of their misfortune”. That may sound a little Machiavellian, but it's how business works.

Brush-off number 7 is one that, when I heard it for the first time, my mental gears locked up. I didn't know how to respond to the following request for a meeting: *“We already have more business than we can handle.”* Yes, someone actually told me this once. *“We already*

have more business than we can handle.” I was stunned! It was almost as if the manager was saying, “*We don’t want to grow anymore because we’re making too much money*”. This statement turns the concept of capitalism on its head. The best way to flip that excuse is to say the following:

“That’s a great problem to have. But we both know that in today’s economy, things can change quickly, which is why I think we should get together. How does (date and time) sound?”

This quick flip helps remind the prospect that things can change and they inevitably will, so why not begin planning now when things are going well. This is similar to the “*I’m too busy to meet with you*” brush-off. In both cases, you have to work to convince the prospect that what you have to offer is worth giving you the time of day.

Let me also point out the obvious here. If a client has more business than they can handle, that also means that they have money to spend, which is why this brush-off is a positive sign that you’ve identified a good prospect.

Brush-Off Number 8:

This brush-off is the bane of any salesperson’s existence:

“I can get it cheaper somewhere else” or “You cost too much.”

If I got a dollar for every time I heard that brush-off, I’d hit my quota! In requesting a meeting, I don’t think you’ll get this response unless the client knows your company’s reputation and pricing. Later on, I’m going to talk about how you should avoid trying to sell or convince your prospect that they should buy from you over the phone. This is a big mistake.

If a client is already aware of your pricing because of your reputation, here’s what you need to say:

*“My other client’s thought so as well until they realized what they **were**n’t getting for the money, which is why I think we should get together. How does (date/time) sound?”*

This quick flip falls under the apples-to-apples comparison retort. Many times, a prospect will compare your product with a competitor who has an inferior product. In this case, the prospect is not comparing apples-to-apples or doing a fair comparison since your product offers much more.

This quick flip is designed to tell the prospect that he or she may not be getting what they think, which is why the competitor’s price is cheaper. Here, you begin to plant

the seeds of doubt as to what they're really buying versus what you have to sell. Now the prospect may respond with something like:

“Well, how is your product different?”

Remember, **you don't want to sell over the phone**. Use this quick flip to gain control of the conversation and focus it back on getting the meeting:

“Depending on the product you currently use, there are many differences in what we offer, which is why we should get together. How does (date/time) sound?”

Notice that I avoid getting into a comparison conversation without knowing in detail what the prospect is already using. This can only be done in a face-to-face meeting, so avoid trying to convince the prospect over the phone. Experience has taught me this simply will not work.

Brush-Off Number 9:

Let's say you have the prospect on the phone, but he doesn't want to commit to a meeting with you until he checks with others. This brush-off is known as “deferring to a higher authority”. The prospect will try to convince

you that he needs to check with others to see if it's possible. They'll say something like:

"I need to talk to my partner, boss, wife, etc."

If that's the case, then your quick flip should be something like:

"That sounds reasonable to me. In the meantime, let's set up a time so we can meet. Would (date) or (date) be better for you?"

Again, what we want to do is solidify a date. Did you notice what I did differently on this quick flip? (See flip above.) What I did was offer the prospect two dates for a meeting instead of one. Why? Well, here's another sales influence tip. When you offer people two options, the chances of them saying "yes" to one of them increases dramatically. In selling, (more specifically closing), we call this the "alternative close". Here, you're giving the prospect an opportunity to choose. This gives the prospect some sense of control and power, thereby opening them up to a picking one of the two dates.

Now, you can combine this tactic with the earlier tactic of selecting a date that's farther out into the future. You can offer the client a meeting date in a couple of days

or for next week. More often than not, the prospect will choose the date that is farthest out.

So, by combining the tactics of using a date in the future with the alternative close, you're chances of securing a meeting go up.

Brush-Off Number 10:

One of the most despised brush-offs of any salesperson, I don't care who you are, is the dreaded:

"I need to think about it."

No other brush-off that I know of can bring a sales process to a screeching halt like this one. Chills run down a salesperson's spine, all the way down to their wallet, as they sense the sale slipping away.

When I hear this brush-off, I know that the last thing the client is going to do is think about it, once the phone conversation is over. But here's how you can flip that brush-off:

"That sounds like a good idea to me. In the meantime, let's go ahead and schedule a meeting.

Would you like to meet on (date) or (date)?"

By using the phrase "in the meantime", I am telling the client that I understand that he needs time to think about it,

but I'm also saying that there will be plenty of time to think about it between now and the time we meet. This response is so in your face that again, you have to find a way to say it that makes you comfortable. You may want to soften it a bit and say something like:

“The best way to think about something is having all the facts in front of you, which is why we should meet. When would be better for you, (date) or (date)?”

Notice how I softened it a bit, but I also emphasized that the only way to make a good decision is by having all the facts in front of you. No rational person can argue with this logic which is why this quick flip is effective.

When a client tells you that they'll think about it, I want to reiterate that once you hang up that phone, **they're not going to think about it**. They have too much going on to give you any thought. So, you have to secure that meeting right there and then on that phone call. If you don't, you haven't advanced the sale. You've just put the sale into continuation mode which is not going to get you closer to the sale.

It's also worth mentioning, while we're on the topic of *“I'll have to think about it”*, that if you are ever in a

meeting and you leave with the client saying, *“I’ll think about it”*, that will probably be the last time you’ll see that client.

Here’s a general rule that you should follow. **Never leave a meeting or appointment without setting up the next appointment right there and then.** If the client says, *“I’ll have to think about it”*, your quick flip response should be:

“I agree you should think about and in the meantime, let’s go ahead and set up a time for us to meet again. Would (date/time) or (date/time) be good for you?”

Brush-Off Number 11:

Prospects who are familiar with your product or company will likely throw this brush-off at you:

“What you have won’t work for us.”

By now, you should start getting an idea of how to flip this into a positive. How’s this for a quick flip:

“Many of my clients have the same initial reaction, which is why we should get together. How does (date/time) sound?”

Or how about Brush-Off Number 12:

“We’ve had a bad experience working with outside companies like yours.”

How should you respond?

“That’s unfortunate and I want to assure that it never happens again, which is why I definitely think we should get together. How does (date/time) sound?”

Here you, as a salesperson, are showing some sympathy for what has happened in the past. This approach humanizes you to the prospect. In this scenario, you have to overcome not only the “newness” factor since they don’t know you, but you have to overcome the baggage of their past experience. Which means you’ll have to work even harder to earn their trust.

Brush-Off Number 13:

I don’t often hear this brush-off, but when you’re dealing with a person who doesn’t want to risk adversity or doesn’t like conflict, you may hear:

“I feel like you’re pressuring me into a sale.”

Your quick flip should be:

“The last thing I want you to feel is pressure or to be uncomfortable, which is why we should get together and walk through it slowly. How does (date/time) sound?”

This flip makes you come across as less aggressive and more sympathetic to the client’s feeling of being pressured.

Brush-Off Number 14:

“I am not familiar with your company. Can you provide references?”

You flip it by saying:

“I’d be more than happy to provide references and would encourage you to call them. In the meantime, let’s go ahead and set up a meeting. Which day would be good for you, (date) or (date)?”

Brush-Off Number 15:

“Well, I’ll get back to you on (a time and date).”

This brush-off requires a little bit more finesse when it comes to flipping. Your response should be:

“Sounds great! In the meantime, let’s set up a time one week from today at (time). And, if you decide to change the time or date, will you call me?”

This quick flip allows you to force the prospect to give you a date and time, but still allows the prospect not to feel too pressured by you adding in, “...if you decide to change the time or date...”. This makes good business sense. You don’t ever want the client to feel so much pressure to say “yes” that the pressure seems negative. If that happens, the prospect will associate you with how uncomfortable you make him feel and refuse to meet with you or buy from you in the future.

Also, when you add the “...will you call me?”, what you’re really looking for here is some sort of verbal commitment. In sales influence, we know that once someone commits to something verbally, the chances of them following through are pretty high. Remember, if you walk out of that meeting without a date, your chances of getting another opportunity go down significantly.

The one constant in all of the brush-off responses is “How does (date/time) sound?” Keep this phrase ready in your mind at all times. Focus on getting a meeting!

The Tease and Squeeze

During a cold call, there will come a time when the prospect will want to know a little more before agreeing to meet with you. The danger here lies in getting into too much detail over the phone. Keep in mind that if you do try to sell over the phone, all bets are against you actually succeeding in the sale.

The challenge here is to give them enough information to TEASE them and then SQUEEZE them into a commitment on a time to meet. I call this approach the “tease and squeeze”.

Here’s how it works. Let’s say you’ve used one of the quick flips I suggested, but instead of agreeing to a meeting date and time, the prospect responds with one of the following questions or statements:

- Tell me a little more about it now.
- Give me some background on your company.
- Give me an example.
- Walk me through the process.
- How do you do that?
- Tell me (show me) how you can help us?

These statements or questions are potential landmines. Without knowing upfront what the prospect's concerns or issues are, you may say something, albeit unknowingly, that will kill any chances of a sale. The key here is to give them enough information to satisfy the question or statement without going into great detail and stay focused on the main sales objective, **securing a face-to-face meeting**.

Let me walk you through a typical scenario I often encounter when trying to sell my sales training program to companies. I have the prospect on the line and have asked for the meeting. He responds with, *“Well, tell me more about how your product can help us.”* At this point, I have to give the prospect a little sample or teaser, if you will, on how I can help their sales team. So, I respond by saying something like:

“There are several ways we can help teams improve their sales performance. One of the first things we teach salespeople is how to shorten their sales cycle by learning how to set up the follow-up appointment before they leave. This strategy alone will shorten their sales cycle by 25%.”

A prospect might say:

“That sounds good. Give me another example.”

Now, I’ve just given the prospect a piece of good information on how I teach salespeople. You would think that would be enough to set up the meeting. But often times, the prospect will try to extract a little more information, which will draw you into a full-blown sales pitch over the phone. Listen carefully; resist the temptation. **Don’t do it.** Here’s what you’re going to say:

“Mr. Prospect, I’d be more than happy to give you more than just another example. When would be a good time for us to get together, (date) or (date)?”

You’ve refocused the prospect on what you’re trying to get, **a meeting**. By turning the prospect’s question into the very reason to meet and putting it in the form of a question, you have regained control of the conversation.

Another example of a prospect wanting to know more is the question many of us have often heard:

“Well, how much is this going to cost me?”

Again, the prospect is trying to bait you into a sales pitch over the phone. No matter what price you give, it’ll be the wrong one because you haven’t had a chance to establish the value of what you’re offering. Some salespeople think, *“Well, if I just give him a price, he’ll agree to meet with*

me.” Right? WRONG! Any talk of pricing before you’ve had a chance to present your product fully and in the proper light will not help you in any way advance the sale. Avoid any type of price conversation over the phone if at all possible.

So what should you say? How about:

“We offer a wide range of products and prices and I’m sure we can find something that’s in your particular range, which is why we should get together. How does (date/time) sound?”

Notice again that I took the brush-off as a reason for us to get together, thereby refocusing the prospect on agreeing to meet with me. I just gave two ways to handle a prospect’s brush-off when they ask you for more information over the phone. In general, if the prospect says, *“Tell me more”*, give them a little nugget of information and then ask them for the meeting once more. If they want to know, *“How much?”*, let them know that there is a range of pricing and only by having a sit-down meeting can you give him the right price for their particular needs.

The “Tease and Squeeze” (i.e., Tease them with a piece of information and then Squeeze them for a meeting or commitment) is a powerful tool to add to your sales

arsenal. With some practice, you'll be able to respond to requests for additional information with ease. Like anything else, it just takes a little practice and a smidgeon of courage to pull it off.

The Poke and Prod

If you just happen to get a belligerent person on the phone who simply refuses to listen to anything you have to say, let alone set up a meeting, let me introduce you to the “Poke and Prod” strategy for dealing with hostile prospects. If you’re a fan of movies and television series of a legal nature, I’m sure you’ve seen a lawyer who, after asking a witness a question, gets an uncooperative answer. The lawyer then looks at the judge and asks, “*Your Honor, request permission to treat this witness as hostile?*” The judge replies, “*Proceed.*” The lawyer then assumes a more aggressive posture and begins a more pointed line of questioning.

Unfortunately, this can also happen to you when you make a cold call and you get a belligerent prospect on the line. No matter what you say, the person has a harsh brush-off such as:

- “*We don’t have any use for that!*”
- “*We already have our own product!*”

- *“That won’t work for us!”*
- *“There’s nothing you have that we need!”*
- *“Our team is doing just fine without it!”*

It’s not so much what they say sometimes as how they say it. I’ve had people who have been downright rude and nasty on a simple cold call. And in many cases, these are people who aren’t even the real decision-makers. When you do get a decision-maker on the line who has this type of attitude, the best way to respond is by interrupting their current flow of thinking. The best way I found to do that is by asking a simple question that most people automatically respond to.

If a client gives you a terse brush-off and isn’t really engaging you in the conversation, come back with this statement of request:

“Mr. Prospect, let me ask you a quick question.”

I don’t care who you are, this statement will stop anyone dead in their mental tracks. Like Pavlov’s dogs, we respond to this without hesitation.

Let’s say that you’ve requested a meeting, but the client has ignored your request and responds as follows:

*“Well, we don’t have any use for that
(product/service).”*

You're going to respond like so:

*“Mr. Prospect, let me ask you a quick question.
How do you handle (state the problem you solve)
this today?”*

If you have a really headstrong prospect on the line, he may say:

*“We don't. We let people figure it out for
themselves.”*

That's your cue to say:

*“Then we should definitely get together because
we've worked with other companies who had a
similar outlook. How about (date/time)?”*

As you can see, I'm right back to asking for an appointment. Use the *“Let me ask you a question”* to flip the conversation back in your favor.

Getting a prospect to agree to an appointment requires some time, effort, and practice on your part. After a while, you'll be able to have these types of “Poke and Prod” responses rolling off your tongue naturally.

Which brings up a very important question. How do you begin preparing and practicing the quick flip, the poke and prod, and the tease and squeeze techniques? The best way to begin is by taking some time out to sit down

and write all the possible responses your prospect will likely throw out at you.

To practice your quick flips, take a blank sheet of paper and draw a line down the middle. In the left-hand column, list every possible brush-off a prospect might say to you over the phone. Then, on the right-hand side, write out your quick flip for each corresponding brush-off. When you're finished, review, practice, and memorize each one.

By the way, if you don't like writing things out, then use a software program like Microsoft Excel or Word to list out the brush-offs and responses. This way, you'll be able to have a nice and neat printout in front of you when making your calls. Even when the responses have been memorized, it helps to have something in black and white in front of you to alleviate any hesitations. The more quickly and easily you respond to questions, the more authority you will retain in the conversation and the more professional you will seem.

Putting it Into Practice

Now that you know what you have to say and how to respond to a prospect, you need a system for making these cold calls. Having a system is of key importance. A system is a set way of doing something consistently so you get the desired results every time. McDonald's has a system for making a burger. Every McDonald's restaurant follows this system, which is why a burger on the West Coast will taste very similar to a burger on the East Coast. If, for example, a burger doesn't come out the way it should, all the people at McDonald's have to do is review the system to see what changed. Reviewing each step in the system allows them to immediately find out where the problem lies.

In selling and in prospecting, you have to develop a system for making phone calls. Once you have your system in place, you'll be able to review each step of the process and identify where you might need improvement.

In 1939, an insurance salesman by the name of Frank Bettger wrote what some consider to be the first best

seller on selling called How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success in Selling. In this book, Bettger discussed how he decided to keep track of all the phone calls, appointments, and sales he would make in a twelve-month period. He recorded these numbers in a tabulation method that I'll describe in a just a moment. Bettger found that at the end of the twelve months, he had made 1849 phone calls. Of those 1849 phone calls, he was successful in getting 828 appointments. Of the 828 appointments, he managed to close 65 deals.

Bettger used a tabulation method to keep track of his progress. A tabulation method is simply writing down the number one for every call he made on a daily basis and then adding them up at the end of the day. If he secured an appointment, he scratched a one on that date and at the end of the week, he would add up all the ones to see how many appointments he got for the week. This simple, but effective method (before the days of computers), allowed Bettger to keep score of how things were going and where he might have to improve his system.

Let me go through these numbers again very slowly because I want to introduce two new concepts that you

need to understand and that are critical in tracking your own cold calling success.

Call-to-Appointment Ratio

Bettger made 1849 phone calls and managed to secure 828 appointments. That means for almost every three phone calls, he was able to get one appointment. You can calculate this ratio by dividing the number of calls, 1849, by the number of appointments. This is what is called a call-to-appointment ratio, which is simply how many calls did you make to secure one meeting. Let's say that in one week you made 100 phone calls and you secure five meetings. If you take the 100 calls and divide that by the five meetings, you'll get the number twenty. Which means for every twenty phone calls you made, you secured one meeting. In other words, you have a call-to-appointment ratio of 20:1.

Appointment-to-Close Ratio

Another important number to keep track of is the appointment-to-close ratio. Using Bettger's numbers again, we know that he had secured 828 appointments and he was able to close 65 of those deals. This means that for every

thirteen or so appointments, he was able to close one deal. How did I get thirteen? If you take 828 (secured appointments) and divide it by 65 (closed deals), you get approximately thirteen. This makes Bettger's appointment-to-close ratio 13:1 or for every thirteen calls, he was able to close one deal.

Refining the Process

Both the call-to-appointment and appointment-to-close ratio are key indicators of whether or not you're making any progress. The call-to-appointment number, which is how many appointments you get based on the number of phone calls you made, is key for obvious reasons. If you're making the calls but not getting the appointments, then that should tell you that something in what you're saying over the phone is not working. Maybe your quick flips aren't being delivered correctly or effectively. Or maybe you're calling on the wrong people in the first place who may not be decision-makers. Whatever the reason, the good news is that in tracking this number, you can quickly identify where the problem is in your process so you can correct it.

If your appointment-to-close ratio, which is how many deals you closed based on how many appointments you had, is high, then that's an indicator that something is wrong in the second half of the sales process. If you managed to get the appointment but couldn't close the deal, then your problems have nothing to do with cold calling and everything to do with how you present the product or how you go about trying to close the deal. Again, the good news is that you've at least isolated the problem and can begin working on correcting it by improving your product presentation or developing stronger closing techniques.

Keeping track of your phone calls, appointments, and deals you close will help you evaluate or keep score of how well you're doing. There's an old saying that says you can't fix what you can't measure. Try keeping score for one whole month and see if you're able to spot any weaknesses in your sales process. The results may surprise you.

When to Move On

I want to spend some time talking about prospects who won't commit to buying. It has been my experience, and that of anyone in sales, that there are a group of prospects out there that will waste your time and never buy. This is the reality of selling. Too often we get sucked into meeting their every whim or demand, running around doing things for them, and in the end, they say, "*Thank you, but no, thank you*". Nothing can be more frustrating!

Frank Bettger in his book, How I Raised Myself from Failure to Success in Selling, addressed this issue in a very insightful way. After tracking his clients for a year, he came up with some very interesting numbers that are worth sharing. His records show that 70 % of his sales were made on the first appointment (meeting), 23% on the second, and only 7% on the third and after. These numbers are revealing. Seventy percent of the sales were made on the first appointment and another twenty-three on the second. This obviously means that 93% of the deals required no more than two appointments. But let me zoom in a little more and share with you a big "Aha!" moment

that Bettger had. In reviewing how much time he spent with his prospects, he found that 50% of his time was being spent on going after the 7%. Wow! Bettger was spending 50% of his time going after 7%.

Referring back to my point about prospects wasting our time, how many of you have gone back to see a client over and over again, more than three, five, seven, or more times only to have the prospect say “No, thank you” in the end? It’s frustrating. And what happens after you hear that? You mentally kick yourself in the backside and respond to yourself by saying you’ll never let that happen again. But, much like the rubber band that is stretched and once the tension is released, will go back to its original position, so too the average salesperson.

The point Bettger was making is that if he wanted to improve his sales efficiency, the best way to do it was to stop spending so much time on deals that had a low chance of closing. I know salespeople who make it a policy not to go back to see a client a third time based on this number. In other words, if they can’t get a commitment, a “yes” or “no” by the end of the second meeting, the prospect would be taken off the target list altogether or handed to someone else.

In selling, you have to learn to move on when a client simply won't commit. It's hard for some people to do this. Studies have shown that the more time you have invested in a prospect, the harder it is for you to let go and move on.

I've come to the conclusion that in today's world of accessibility to information, most prospects know what they want even before the salesperson shows up. If you don't have what they want or need, move on. The faster you can identify people that won't buy, the better your chances of spending time on people who will buy from you.

I believe in the rule of thirds. One-third of people will buy from you if you just show up and show them what they want. Another one-third will never buy from you no matter what you have to sell. And the last third is the one you have to work for in order to close the deal.

The information we've covered is dedicated to acquiring that one-third, the uncommitted. The selling process begins with a phone call and ends with either a "yes" or a "no". These are the two bookends of selling. The best of the best know. As I have shown in these pages, without prospecting, all other efforts (learning the product,

giving great presentations, having charisma, etc.), don't matter. What matters is your ability to get in front of a prospect. And the law of averages says that the more you do it, the more likely you are to close a deal.

So, pick up that phone and start calling!

Appendix

Is Cold Calling Effective: Calculating the Present, Future and Net Value of a Prospect

Let's take a closer look at the sales practice of cold calling, or prospecting. Over the last couple of years, several books have claimed that cold calling is a waste of a salesperson's time and effort. Before any conclusions are drawn, it's important to assign an empirical value to determine whether or not cold calling is effective.

Once the numbers are calculated, we can look at the Net Present Value of a sale and the Future Value of any potential sales to better understand the real numerical value of cold calling. I'll also identify a mitigating factor that directly impacts the success or failure of cold calling.

Does cold calling really work? Many books have been written about the value of cold calling and how it can help

you grow your business. But recently, books like “Never Cold Call Again,” “Cold Calling Sucks,” and a few others have argued that cold calling is a complete waste of time. They claim that the effectiveness of cold calling is a myth. Are the authors correct?

It will be helpful to take a closer look at cold calling by first gathering some key information about the process, and then setting up some metrics to measure its effectiveness. Before making a determination on the value or non-value of cold calling, I’ll examine the activity of cold calling in the context of a client’s value today and over time.

Cold Calling by the Numbers

Say that your target goal as a salesperson is to make at least 10 calls a day. Out of those 10 calls a day, you manage to set one appointment for the following week.

- Your **Call-to-Appointment** ratio would then be 10:1 (ten calls results in one appointment).

So, if you made 10 calls per day for a whole week and managed to get one appointment per day, the following week you would have 5 appointments setup. Out of those five appointments you’ve setup for the following week let’s say you managed to close one deal.

- Your **Appointment-to-Close** ratio would then be 5:1 (five appointments resulted in one sale).

If you look at it from an overall phone calling perspective,

- Your **Call-to-Close ratio** would then be 10:1 (ten calls resulted in one sale).

Phone Time Invested

In reviewing the calls you made, you realize that there were times when you got the prospect's voicemail and left a message that lasted approximately 1 minute. On other calls, the prospect actually answered, and it took approximately 15 minutes to set up an appointment.

If your **Average Call Time** was 10 minutes per phone call, Then you would have spent a total of 100 minutes per day (10 calls per day x 10 minutes per call) or 500 minutes per week (100 minutes per day x 5 days) on the phone.

- The **Total Phone Time** invested to setup those 5 meetings was 8.3 hours (500 minutes / 60 minutes in an hour).

Client Time Invested

Now let's look at how much time you invested in those 5 meetings. Let's assume it took you 1 hour to drive to and

from the meeting. You also needed about 1 hour of preparation time for each client before the meeting and each meeting lasted an average of 1 hour. That means that every meeting costs you 3 hours of your time.

- **Total Client Time** invested is 15 hours (5 meetings x 3 hours) to close 1 deal.

When you put all of this data together, you can figure out how much time was invested in setting up the meeting and making the sale. First, you need to add the Total Phone Time and the Total Client Time together to get an idea of how much it took to close one deal.

- **Total Time Invested = Phone Time + Client Time**
= 23.3 hours (Phone time 8.3 hours + Client time 15 hours) to close 1 deal.

Based on these numbers, it seems that the experts who advised against cold calling have a case. It hardly seems worth it to pick up the phone and call. No one in their right mind wants to spend the equivalent of 3 days on phone (23.3 hours) just to close one sale.

But you need to consider some other very important variables before we conclude that cold calling is a waste of

time. You still don't have a full picture of what's really happening in this sales process.

Present, Future and Net Client Value

Client Value is an area of sales that is seldom commented upon but is extremely important to understand. It's simply the value a certain client holds to your business. There are three kinds of value to take into consideration: Present Value (PV), Future Value (FV) and Net Value (NV) of client.

The PV is how much a client is buying from you today. The FV is how much more a client will buy over a given period of time. And the NV is the sum of both numbers which will represent the net total of how much a client has purchased from you over a given period of time. These numbers are critical in understanding whether or not prospecting is useful or not.

Present Value (PV) of the Client

In order to determine whether or not the investment of their time was worth it, a salesperson should know the average sale of any product or service

Let's assume that an **Average Sale** for a given product is \$200. Let's also assume that the client will never buy another product from you again. If this is the case, then the

PV of the client is equivalent to the Average Sale price of \$200. Present Value here refers to what the client is worth to you today and only today.

Future Value (FV) and Net Value (NV) of the Client

But what if the client does buy from you again? If, over a given period of time, the client intends to buy an additional \$500 worth of products, this would be considered the **FV of a client**. And, if we add the PV (what a client will buy today) and FV (what the client intends to buy tomorrow) you arrive at the **NV of the client** which is \$700 (\$200 + \$500).

Now that you know how to calculate the value of a client, let's go back and compare that with the amount of time utilized to acquire the client.

The amount of calls made and the number of hours invested in a client, combined with the value of the client, will draw a much clearer picture of the actual investment involved in cold calling.

There are two ways to analyze these numbers: Present Value and Net Value:

Present Values

PV of \$200 divided by 50 calls = \$4.00 per call

*PV of \$200 divided by 23.3 hour of Invested Time =
\$8.57 per hour*

These hourly rates for the 'present' are not encouraging. For a client who buys just one time, each call is equivalent to earning four dollars per call - hardly a motivation to jump on the phone and keep dialing for dollars. The hourly rate isn't that enticing either.

Even as you look into the future, and assume the client will buy more down the road, the numbers don't look that much better:

Net Values

NV of \$700 divided by 50 calls = \$14.00 per call

*NV of \$700 divided by 23.3 hour of Invested Time =
\$30.04 per hour*

One Week Time Period	
Calls per Day	10
Average Length of Call (minutes)	10
Appointments per day	1
Deals closed per week	1
Time Invested per Client (hours)	3
PV (Average Sale)	
PV (Average Sale)	\$ 200.00
FV (Future Sales)	\$ 500.00
PV per call	
PV per call	\$ 4.00
PV per hour	
PV per hour	\$ 8.57
NV per call	
NV per call	\$ 14.00
NV per hour	
NV per hour	\$ 30.00

Although the NV isn't that bad, especially at \$30 per hour, for many salespeople this return on investment (ROI) simply wouldn't cut it. If you value your time at more than \$30 per hour, then clearly cold calling seems to be a waste of time.

But before you hang up the phone on cold calling, there's one more important factor that needs to be considered.

The X Factor

Based on the numbers above, it would be easy to conclude that cold calling is a waste of time. There is one mitigating factor that can turn this analysis around - the average size of the deal. Imagine for a moment that you're selling a high ticket item with an average sale price of \$1,000. Let's run the numbers once more:

Present Values

PV of \$1,000 divided by 50 calls = \$20.00 per call

*PV of \$1,000 divided by 23.3 hour of Invested Time
= \$42.86 per hour*

As you can see, all of a sudden the numbers look more appealing. I'm sure a salesperson would be motivated to pick up the phone knowing it was worth \$20.00 a call or better still \$42.91 an hour for making the call.

What if every client you sold to purchased an additional \$2,000 (FV) worth of product over the next year? The new NV would be \$3,000 (\$1,000 plus \$2,000).

Net Values

NV of \$3,000 divided by 50 calls = \$60.00 per call

*NV of \$3,000 divided by 23.3 hour of Invested Time
= \$128.57 per hour*

The numbers here speak for themselves. A salesperson is more likely to get excited about picking up a phone and cold calling if they knew each call was worth \$60 today (PV) and almost \$130 tomorrow (NV).

One Week Time Period	
Calls per Day	10
Average Length of Call (minutes)	10
Appointments per day	1
Deals closed per week	1
Time Invested per Client (hours)	3
PV (Present Value)	
PV (Average Sale)	\$ 1,000.00
FV (Future Sales)	\$ 2,000.00
NV (Net Value)	
PV per call	\$ 20.00
PV per hour	\$ 42.86
NV (Net Value)	
NV per call	\$ 60.00
NV per hour	\$ 128.57

Conclusion

So, is cold calling worth it or not? The answer is ... it depends! To determine whether or not cold calling is effective, you must consider the X Factor (i.e., the size of the sale). If the item being sold has a low margin or commission, then one could easily argue that cold calling is NOT an effective strategy for growing the business.

But on the other hand, if the average margin or commission is high, the numbers clearly prove that cold calling becomes a valuable part of the overall marketing effort to win new business.

When it comes to cold calling, the size (of the sale) does matter and is the primary factor in determining for the salesperson whether or not they should even pick up the phone.

For more information go to www.SalesInfluence.com

