



The Builder of **SALES CHAMPIONS!**

July 2009 Newsletter **Understanding the Telephone** by Tom Hopkins

For years people have contacted me wanting more information on telephone techniques. Today's generation of selling demands thorough understanding of the use of the telephone. So how do you gain your share of the million-dollar telephone sales market? By being prepared. People today invest in more products and services over the phone and online than ever before — and they never meet the sales representative. The telephone is a tool of business and it is imperative that we as salespeople know how to use it.

When a consumer calls to inquire about your product or service, we as salespeople, have a moral obligation to turn that inquiry call into a presentation — especially if the company you represent has been in business awhile and has created a reputation.

You have no idea of the large number of consumers who pick up the phone every day, call a department store or a company, and the person who answers for the company has never been trained to use the telephone. Oftentimes, salespeople make it sound as if they are doing the caller a favor by answering the questions. That's a shame.

As salespeople, we have a responsibility to increase our company's profit so it stays in existence. When you chose your job as a salesperson, one of your jobs was to do anything in your power to increase your company's profits — that is your lifeblood and existence.

When I was a manager, I had 18 sales professionals I managed. Every once in a while I would get someone who wasn't professional, and when a caller would ask for information, the unprofessional would give out all the information and never seek to arrange a time to visit with the caller. Please realize that when your company invests money by doing a mailing or any other direct advertising to make that phone ring, the telephone calls must be handled properly.

Your callers are people who want to know more information. When people call you, they generally have an overall goal. Their basic attitude and purpose is to *get* information and *give* nothing. That's why they are calling you — to get the investment, the details, and then to call another company to see whether they can save a few pennies. If you do not get a visit arranged with the callers, they can wind up with an inferior product because you didn't do your job to stop their curiosity shopping with the way you used the telephone.

What do you think the average salesperson does when he or she gets an incoming inquiry call? *Gives out too much information or tries to sell on the phone.*



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When receiving a call, your first goal is to get the name of the caller. The way you get his or her name is when he or she calls and says, "I'm calling regarding..." you say, "Yes. By the way, my name is _____. May I ask who is calling please?" You'll be amazed with that phraseology how he or she will answer, "This is Bill Smith." Try never to go with their first name. Say, "Yes, Mr. Smith, how may I help you?"

The second goal with an inquiry call is to arrange and confirm a time to meet the caller face-to-face. Your goal is to either have them come into your location or you go visit them. Don't just let them get information and disappear into the vast unknown.

And of course, number three, get a phone number for follow-up. Never talk with a potential client on the phone without getting a phone number. Whatever your product or service, try to keep files on anyone who calls you. They may not be interested today, but if you keep in touch with people you'll be amazed how they will be ready when you follow-up with them at a later date.

Like anything you do in selling, you have to prepare for it. The way you are going to handle the phone calls you receive takes preparation too. There are four things I ask people to do as preparation prior to answering the phone. **Number one, know all brochures and advertising.** If your company regularly mails out printed advertising, you really need to know what that mail piece says because it's a hot button as to why they are calling you. If your company puts an ad in the paper, or does television, radio, or any other type of advertising, you must really know the ad so you'll know what the advertising says. When a caller asks questions about the advertising piece, you'll be more knowledgeable about what your caller is referring to. Something in the ad caused him or her to pick up the phone and call. Find out what the hot button is and then work to get an appointment with the caller using that information.

The second way to be prepared in using the telephone is to always have paper and pen available. Don't rely on your memory when people call you. I always keep a message pad next to the phone so I can quickly write down the person's name and what he or she is calling about so when I meet him or her later, I am more intelligent about his or her needs. It's always impressive when you can reiterate what was expressed during your prior conversation. It shows that you care.

The third step is to forget your own challenges. Many salespeople get on the telephone and suddenly start talking about their own problems. Doing this sends a negative message to the potential client. The instant that phone rings, we have to put aside anything that could keep us from getting an appointment or making a sale. That includes personal challenges, in-office distractions, and any negative feelings from your last client contact. As far as any caller is concerned, when you pick up that telephone, you are there for one and only one reason — to serve their needs to the best of your ability.

The last step is to be mentally prepared to win. I always looked at telephone calls as a contest. Would someone call and get more information from me, or would I



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get more information from them — and arrange a time to visit? What steps would I take to turn that one call into a presentation and sale, or that transaction into a load of additional referred business?

Consumers don't really want to meet us when they're making calls to our places of business. All they want is information. How do I know if the product they're asking about will even meet their needs if I don't develop the opportunity to visit with them, get to know them, understand their situation as it stands today, and make a solid recommendation based on my expertise in the field?

I am an industry expert. I have an obligation to help people who are interested in my product or service to make a decision that is truly good for them. That's a tough thing to do over the telephone with most products and services. So, learn to use that telephone to the best of your ability to make the caller feel an urgent need to meet you.

TIMELY TIP

Understanding Proportion in Communication

Most of us were born with two ears and one mouth. What we're not born with is an innate understanding that God provided us those tools in the proportion they were meant to be used if we are to become effective communicators and survive well in our world.

If we learn to listen twice as much as we talk, we will pick up on valuable bits and pieces of information that will be to our benefit in the selling arena.

Unfortunately, most salespeople operate under the misconception that the reverse is true — that they must talk twice as much as the average person in order to move products and services.

By listening, you will learn exactly what it is your potential future client wishes to own with regard to benefits. You can then turn that information into a sale by demonstrating the features of your product or service that fulfill those needs.

The best single bit of advice for anyone in sales is this: **Listen twice as much as you talk!**



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I heartily endorse the Send Out Cards program.

Click on the logo to test it for yourself--at no charge.

~ Tom Hopkins



CLOSE OF THE MONTH

The Feel, Felt, Found Technique

The Feel, Felt, Found technique is an age-tested, proven strategy of moving your customers gently to a new way of thinking. There are three separate parts to Feel, Felt, Found:

- *"I understand how you feel."* This wording lets a customer know that you heard him or her and can relate.
- *"Initially, other (top purchasing agents, CEOs, mothers...) felt that way."* You are letting him or her know that this initial thought is common, meaning that the situation can change.
- *"What they found, however, was that after doing 'X' was that 'Y' happened."*

'X' is what you want your customer to do (purchase your product or put a deposit down now...).

'Y' is something positive your customer will receive that he or she cares a great deal about.

This other group of people changed their minds, did what you recommended they do, and were very pleased with the outcome.

Phraseology: *"So, Steve... tell me something you would like right now."*

Steve responds, *"I want to be as successful as you, Tom."*



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"Steve, I understand how you feel. Initially, other ambitious salespeople felt the same way. What they discovered by staying positive and working hard at their craft each day was that they were very pleased with their own success."

Excerpted from The Certifiable Salesperson book, \$19.95.

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