

Making an effective sales call

At some stage or other, all business owners have to make a sales pitch for their product, service or company, however very few have any formal training in this area. Here are some tips to help you make more effective sales calls.

Be Yourself

Sales is nothing more than directed conversation. We all have the ability to hold conversations. Don't change your personal style (unless it is offensive) because you're trying to get someone to do business with you. Being consistent will gain the respect of your potential customer.

Prepare Ahead

Plan for your sales call in advance. Know something about your prospect and their organisation. Understand where and why your product or service may be of benefit. Know what you want from the call. Do you expect an order? Further information? A bid request? Always have the objective of the call clear in your mind.

Build Rapport

When you arrive on time (not early or late) for the meeting, thank the prospect for seeing you. Ask an open-ended question about the interviewer or the company. Open-ended questions will get the prospect talking and he/she will feel you are interested in listening to issues.

Generate Interest

Make a simple statement about why you are there and what your company provides. Mention the benefits to the client in your interest building statement. An example of an interest building statement is, We are a commercial stationary supplier. We are in the business of helping our clients by providing high quality office stationary and equipment. I wanted to talk with you about the opportunity of doing business with your organisation. Who do you currently buy your stationary from?" This approach should lead into conversation about the prospect's needs and their selection process. He may also pose any questions he has about your company.

Listen!

By asking open-ended questions and listening closely to the answers, you can find what is important to the prospect. You'll know how he/she makes decisions and what projects are coming soon. You can uncover how your company could be of benefit. Remember, listening is not thinking about what you are going to say next while the prospect is speaking.

Tie Needs to Benefits

Now that you have listened to the prospect's needs you are ready to tell him how you can help with his situation. Using the words of the prospect, tell him how your product or service will be a perfect solution for his problem. An example benefit statement might be, "Mr. Customer, you mentioned a need to lower your overall building maintenance costs. By using our Preferred Maintenance offering, you may be able to lower your building cleaning costs by as much as 15 percent."

Close the Sale

Now, you know what the client needs. You know how your product or service can help the prospect meet their objectives. If there are no more issues outstanding then ask for the business. If you think your next step should be a formal proposal, then propose that as the next step. Whatever your meeting objective was, ask for it now. This is the area that makes us all uneasy because we are afraid of being turned down. Remember, the prospect knows why you are there.

Review and Exit

Review the items each of you agreed upon during the meeting. Make sure any action items have dates assigned to them. Never leave the next contact entirely in the hands of the prospect. You want to always leave the door open for further conversation.

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