

# YOU CAN ALWAYS SELL MORE ...

## ***“You Can Always Sell More...By Utilizing Stronger Cold Calling Phone Openings”***

by Jim Pancero

How are you opening up your phone calls, especially when cold calling? There's a simple four step process you can utilize that will increase your success grabbing a prospect's attention and positioning the reason for your call.

I originally learned this simple, yet effective technique from Bill McGrane, my mentor who first taught me how to sell in the early 1970's.

To talk about how to effectively cold call we need to first identify how your cold calling efforts and scripts will be directly effected by your prospect's prior experience with other salespeople. We have two competitors we have to worry about as salespeople. The first set of competitors are the traditional companies we regularly sell against. But the second set of competitors we have to be concerned about are all the high pressured and manipulative sales reps who, over the years, have biased our prospect in their expectations of dealing with salespeople, especially salespeople they don't know who are trying to reach them.

Prospecting or cold calling, is one of the toughest and hardest to maintain aspects of running a territory. How often do you cold call or prospect for new business? The best prospectors are ones who develop a system of “prospecting best practices” identifying new companies to contact and then utilizing a consistent, finely tuned set of selling scripts to generate interest and future selling opportunities.

We also need to identify how tough it is to prospect for new business. Even with the best prospecting techniques and scripts, cold calling is still a high volume effort that tends to yield at best only a few new contacts. Prospecting is similar to gold mining, you have to haul a lot of rock out of the ground just to get an ounce of gold or silver. This high volume of work with low returns is the reason fine tuning your cold calling skills and scripts to maximize both your efficiency and effectiveness is so critical!

### **The Four Steps Of A Successful Telephone Opening**

So lets talk about how you can strengthen your prospecting efforts.

One of the most important “Prospecting best practices” is the utilization of an opening script when your prospect answers their phone. We'll talk about additional “prospecting best practice” ideas like how to increase the effectiveness of your voice mails you leave prospects, in a future newsletter issue.

You have called a prospect and, surprise, they actually answer their phone! What do you now say to open up your conversation?

There are four steps or statements to a successful telephone opening:

1<sup>st</sup> - State your name

2<sup>nd</sup> - State your company's name

3<sup>rd</sup> - State the reason for your call

and then,

4<sup>th</sup> - Ask if this is a convenient time to be calling.

Sounds simple doesn't it? Yet most salespeople don't utilize any type of consistent, simple, yet effective opening when calling prospects.

### **Successful Prospecting Starts With Resistance Lowering**

Selling at its most basic level is really only based on two steps. The first step of selling is to lower a prospect or customer's resistance. And then only after you've lowered their resistance and they're comfortable with you can you move to the second step of actually delivering your selling message. If you don't lower their resistance then they'll never even hear your message.

How effective are you at lowering a prospect's resistance to you and your message, especially on your first call?

Utilizing this simple four stepped telephone opening can dramatically lower your prospect's resistance increasing their potential interest in what you have to say and what you have to sell. Let's go through each of these four steps in more detail.

#### **Step One - State Your Name**

The first step is to identify yourself. It's critical you use your full name by the way, both as an opening to a prospect conversation but also any time you answer your business phone.

One of my clients, Cincinnati Bell, shared a study they had conducted years ago. The study evaluated how people perceive you when you answer your business phone. The three scenarios tested were first, when you answer with just your first name. "Hi, this is Jim from the Johnson Company." The second tested reactions if you only answered using your last name, "Hi, this is Mr. Pancero from Impact Distributors" and the third scenario tested people's responses when you used your full name.

Cincinnati Bell's study showed people perceived the individual answering their phone with only their first name as someone who had no power, no authority to solve their problems, and someone who was probably trying to hide from any responsibility.

The second scenario showed that people perceived someone answering the phone with only their last name as someone who was talking down to them like when the IRS or your bank calls you.

Neither of these two scenarios were positive, but the best of the three was when someone answered with their full name. A person answering their phone with their full name was perceived to be a real person, who had responsibility and the power to help me and solve my problems.

How have you been answering your phone lately?

### **Step Two - State Your Company Name**

The second step is to next identify your company or where you're from. Of the four steps, the reasons for this step are the most self-evident.

### **Step Three - State The Reason For Your Call**

Now the third step is where things begin to get interesting, and unique. The third step or statement of a prospect call opening is to now state the reason for your call. "Mr. Jones, the reason for my call is to understand your upcoming meeting activities and to see if our local hotel property might help increase the positive impact of your meetings."

To understand the reasons this third step is so effective we need to talk again about all of those high-pressured salespeople who've already tried calling your prospect.

High pressured telephone selling is based on two basic concepts of selling. The first concept of all high pressure phone selling is to never give the customer a chance to say anything until you've gotten your entire script presentation out. Ever receive one of those high-pressured calls? The last thing you get to say on these calls is "Hello" with the salesperson talking as long as possible as they attempt to get through their entire script before you have a chance to respond, and to say no.

And the second concept of high pressured phone selling is to only ask questions that have a "yes" response. The goal is to get you in a positive frame of mind so when the high pressured rep finally asks you for the order you'll be more likely to say yes!

Now of course these old worn out high pressured techniques seldom work anymore, but that's not the problem. The problem is prospects are expecting and even looking for salespeople to try these old manipulative techniques on them. So if you as a salesperson even begin to sound like any of those old high pressured salespeople from your prospect's past all you do is increase their resistance to you and your message, and reduce the potential they'll want to talk with you. It's all tied to resistance lowering. If you start to sound like those old high-pressured reps your prospect dislikes and distrusts, then their resistance to you and your message will immediately increase as well.

The goal of this third opening statement of stating the actual reason for your call is meant to lower your prospect's resistance and to begin positioning your call.

## **Step Four - Ask If This Is A Convenient Time For You To Be Calling**

So far you've stated your name when your prospect answered their phone. You then stated your company and the reason for your call. Now the fourth statement is to ask them if this is a convenient time to be calling.

Does it sound like this fourth step is counter-productive to getting a prospect to actually talk with you? Are you thinking, "If I ask my prospect if this is a convenient time to be calling of course they'll say no!"

Well, that's exactly the reason this fourth step is so effective! Remember your high-pressured competitors we talked about earlier who have severely biased your prospects? Well of course they'd never give a prospect a chance to say no this early in your call...and that's why it works! Giving your prospect a chance to say no up front dramatically helps lower their resistance by positioning your call as completely different from all their past high pressured selling experiences!

### **Want To Test Out These Four Steps To Prove Their Validity?**

What do you think of these four simple opening steps to a prospecting phone call? The best way to validate these four steps is the same way Bill McGrane taught them to me, by trying the steps but leaving out a step to see what happens.

When I'd call a prospect but not mention who I was, when I asked if this was a convenient time they'd respond with, "That depends...who are you?"

When I left out my company name they'd ask "What company are you with?" and when I left out the third step of stating the reason for my call they'd respond with "What do you want?" or "Why are you calling me?"

Each time I left out a step I could feel my prospect's resistance dramatically increasing, as I also felt my potential to sell this account dropping.

But the most important lesson I learned...and that I still use daily almost 40 years later is what happened when I asked if this was a convenient time to be calling. I noticed that since their resistance was lowered by this process they actually told me! I didn't get the expected "No go away" responses when I asked. Anyone who told me this wasn't a convenient time always gave me a reason why this wasn't a good time for them. I got answers like "I'm in the middle of a meeting in my office right now" or "I'm just now rushing out the door to get to an appointment" or "I have a deadline in an hour and am rushing to get something finished."

All valid reasons for not having time to talk, but I realized what would have happened if I didn't give them a chance to tell me they were busy, they would've just said no to my business proposal and ended the call as soon as they could.

I realized that up to that point I had been losing tremendous amounts of new business opportunities not because they weren't interested in my business solutions but because they just didn't have time to talk right then.

How many prospects have you lost recently because you didn't ask if they could talk right now and they just told you they weren't interested in what you were selling, just because they didn't have time right then?

And when a prospect would give me the reason it wasn't a good time to talk I immediately would ask, "so when would be a better time to call back?" What impressed me most is they always gave me a better time to call! And then when I did call back I'd always start off with my name and company, and then my third statement was "When I called you last week you were in the middle of an important deadline and asked me to call you back now, is this a better time to be calling?"

### **Final Comments**

So what do you think of these four steps? Are they similar or different to what you've been using? Think this is worth trying as Bill had me try by leaving out a specific step to see it's impact?

Prospecting is one of the toughest and most frustrating aspects to selling. When cold calling you have to go through a lot of prospecting rock to produce even a little new business gold. But the entire process is definitely worth the effort with the new business opportunities it can uncover, and the accelerated sales and profitability that comes from most new accounts.

We know you're good...now the question is....are you good enough...and committed enough to test out this four stepped cold call opening on all of your prospecting calls, so you can accelerate your competitive opportunities and selling success?

To your continued success,

Jim