

Warming Up To Cold Calls

By Chuck And Sue DeFiore

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Will you do just about anything, including sending out hundreds of letters, to avoid making cold calls to prospects? If so, you're not alone. Millions like you have started their own businesses, only to find that the thought of making calls to prospects leaves them paralyzed with anxiety.

As an entrepreneur, the telephone is one of the single most important tools at your command. The key to getting over your hesitation is to stop thinking about your call as a sales pitch, and instead begin practicing "consultative selling." This means uncovering and filling needs in a friendly, supportive way. Before you ever pick up the telephone to contact a prospect, ask yourself, "What does my prospect need from me, and what does my company have to offer that will help this prospect get what he wants?" Then set a goal for your call that will move the prospect closer to a buying decision, such as gaining an appointment or preparing a price quote.

According to entrepreneurs across the country, one of the biggest reasons they hesitate to prospect by telephone is they're unsure of what they should say at the outset. A short, three-part opener, including an introduction of yourself and your company and an opening benefit is the best way to start.

When introducing your company, be sure you can describe what you do in just a short phrase: "This is Susan DeFiore, of DeFiore Enterprises. We are lease purchase consultants." Now mention the benefit: "We can move your home in 30 days or less with the lease purchase advantage. By stating your benefit clearly in your opener, you give the person a good reason to listen further.

Effective telephone contact is made up of two components: Asking good questions and listening carefully to the answers. Ask questions to qualify prospects and overcome objections. There are two types of questions: closed-ended and open-ended.

Closed-ended questions are fact-finders. They can be answered with a fact, a "yes" or a "no." An example of a closed-ended question is: "Would Lease Purchasing work for you?"

Open-ended questions are used to draw someone into a conversation. They reveal the emotion behind the facts. "What do you like best about your home?" is an example of an open-ended question.

Plan in advance the types of questions you'll ask prospects, and record your information in a "call report" for future use. Your call report should include the prospect's contact data, answers to important questions and details on the steps you plan to take.

Finding out someone is using one of your competitors is great news because it indicates he or she is a qualified prospect. You can overcome this common obstacle by convincing the prospect that the benefits of working with you will make the switch worthwhile.

Let's say the seller is with a Realtor. Suppose you could still have your home listed, while we find a tenant/buyer for your home.

After your prospect has answered your questions, it's time to close. You've asked good questions, listened carefully and provided benefit-oriented information. Now ask for what you want. If you can't meet your original goal, state what you will do, such as send the prospect more information and keep in touch. Then be sure to follow through. Relax and follow these steps. With a little bit of practice, you'll find the telephone to be a powerful ally in building your new business.

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