

# Sales Tips: The Importance of Writing Effective Sales Leads

By John W David

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John W David  
jdavidppl@yahoo.com

Internet Marketing - Pro Shop <http://internetmarketing-proshop.com>

Sales Tips -- Write More Effective Leads, Make More Money

Unquestionably, a properly prepared sales lead is an awesome vehicle for opening doors to which you mightn't otherwise have access.

The preponderant difficulty within most companies is that they haven't addressed what constitutes a lead from what is a worthless information sheet.

In other words, these companies haven't recognized their sales departments as an investment of Time, Effort, and Money.

Since Selling, to be a viable investment and a fairly large one at that, must be focused on high, higher, and highest ROI conversion ratios through various means, sending sales people on wild goose chases to close this paper trail is unacceptable.

For example, there are reps who sit down with one of their good ole buddies who gives them maybe their shipping room version of their customer list.

Does the resultant fifty or sixty or so lead forms generated constitute genuine sales leads or just a bunch of worthless contact sheets prepared to satisfy a local or regional boss? That's not a good reason for wasting company resources.

If you are going to send a customer list, photocopy it and mail it to your other branches as information they may or may not have. Have them acknowledge it.

This information may be handled later when time permits by a junior staffer who can qualify the information for whatever its value.

I won't deny that out of all that may come something of a sale.

However, this approach is mostly a waste of Time, Effort, and Money and definitely does not establish your credibility, nor your professionalism, nor of your company as particularly professional alternative supplier.

It is also quite likely that your lead source has given out this information to more than just you and that the information itself may reflect many small, infrequent orders that simply aren't worth the value of the sales call.

Selling is a serious business. Each and every sales call beginning with prep, through the call, on into follow-up is either a unrequited cost or it is an investment with a calculable rate of return.

If you are going to write an effective lead and expect to get back, thereafter, effective leads, write your lead exactly as if you were seated in front of the other person, the object of your lead, with your current contact right there beside you.

Why is this person giving you this lead?

What is the strategic business reason why this person believes you should be calling on his client, his brother, his neighbor, his competitor?

What kind of volume are you sending that other person after? Lots, many, and much are just words.

What points of dissatisfaction are being addressed and how do they impact both on your contact's department and business and on the overall relationship he has with the customer mentioned in the lead?

How long has this difficulty been going on?

What has s/he done locally to resolve the situation with her customer's current supplier?

Has s/he discussed this difficulty with her client and to what effect?

What Benefits are involved?

How would the benefits the local person bought from you impact on the other person, their career, their family, or their business?

If you are selling professionally, there will be an overlap of several or all of those inputs.

After all, why else are you writing a professional lead?

Now, would you drop what you're doing and, with the information you have, actually go visit that other person?

Therefore, when you write your lead you should be filling out a new Perfect Sales Call, call sheet simply because that's what it is.

If your company has lead forms, they should be converted to actual sales call sheets.

The most effective sales lead is a sales call made through another selling professional on your behalf.

Since a professional sales person wouldn't short-change herself, why should she short-change the person to whom she is sending a professionally prepared lead.

### Danger Leads

That raises one last point and a very common way sales reps send leads that shoot the other rep in the foot. Friends and Family leads.

"Hey, Fred. I'd like you to stop by and see my ... . I've told him all about us and about you and...." You know the rest. I know you've been there. Loads of fun.

These 'leads' are loaded with interpretation and surprises. With these leads, follow the process.

Make reference to the relationship. Don't let them get bogged down in it. There's a lot of stuff that goes on in private that neither you nor your colleague should get into. Assume nothing but that you and she have a Qualified Lead to be worked as any other.

Send the Lead (Perfect Sales Call call sheet).

When you send a professionally prepared sales lead complete with every reason why this person will agree to see your alter ego, they can go right into the professional selling process.

They can:

Call to Qualify this person as they would any other.

Confirm the situational stuff on the lead out of the way as normal, being friendly and professional.

Confirm by fax in exactly the manner we've discussed before. Maybe they can copy you in on the fax.

Prepare the call assuming nothing. There are no sure things nor gimmies.

The Sales Call should be made assuming, again, absolutely nothing.

The person on your lead should see the value in how they will be served, their family, their career, and their company.

Do their follow-ups professionally, again, in the manner we've discussed before.

What you want to avoid on these Friends and Family leads are misinterpretations, and very unpleasant surprises. There are no 'sure things' in the professional selling game.

Caveat:

This is equally true and more dangerous of those leads where your contact is that other person's boss.

In these cases, assume there is no leverage, none to be sought, and none to be expected. Convey that in your lead.

Your sales lead and its use should be professional pursuant with the professional selling process as you would apply it to any other situation.

If you make your sales following this format, if you can get your company to follow this format, your sales ratios will rise simply because your efforts will begin from a position of greater knowledge and strength.

I know you've been there.

When you get a great lead to work, one where all the information is such that almost all you have to do is lay it down in front of the other party and s/he just dives right in, not only is it easier to convert the call, it just makes the entire process fun again.

When people have fun doing what they're doing, they just do a better job.

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John W David

Author / Teacher / Speaker

<http://internetmarketing-proshop.com>

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