



UNIT-7

Tele Marketing

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Explore verbal communication techniques
- ✓ Understand how to build trust and respect with customers and colleagues.
- ✓ Understand the essential elements of good communication
- ✓ Discuss how to create a script to maximize your efficiency on the phone.

Unit 7

Verbal Communication

Being Yourself and Sounding Your Best

Some people have a **phone voice**: a tone that they adopt when they pick up the phone and answer it at home or at work. Your phone voice might actually sound quite different from what you might think.

Many, if not all phone based sales people, use some kind of one-piece headset with a built-in earpiece. Depending on the quality of that equipment, as well as the telephone lines, your voice can sound distorted and interfere with the impact of your message. Trying to sound sincere? You might come across as condescending. Trying to sound committed? You could be heard as threatening. That's why it is so important to become aware of your voice and to make it an instrument in your toolbox, just like your keyboard, computer screen, and chair.

Your voice is a symphony created by:

- **Breath control**, which gives your voice its power. Good breath control is a result of proper posture and good care of your physical health, particularly the lungs and diaphragm. You are not breathing effectively if you are slumped and slouching at your desk. Make it a habit to sit up straight when you talk on the telephone. You will also notice that the more physically fit you are, the better control you have over your lung capacity and the more effectively you speak.
- **Tone**, which is the quality of your voice as air moves from your chest through your larynx. If you are angry or upset, surprised or excited, callers will hear it in your voice; this is something that your customers will pay attention to. Although you cannot eliminate negative aspects of tone completely, you can manage them with concentration and practice.
- **Articulation**, which is the way that your pronounce sound by using your mouth, lips, and jaw to form words. Articulation is highly responsive to practice, so if you wish to change the way you pronounce things, practice can certainly make perfect.

There are no right and wrong rules about speech patterns. Just be aware of your accent and vocal patterns and think about how they are helping you at work. Although a regional accent may provide more appeal in some areas, for example, you have to think about whether that same accent interferes with clear communication. As our workplaces continue to diversify, and we offer sales services around the world 24/7, the number of accents and regional variations will increase. You have to ensure that your customers can understand you.

The Four E's

The four E's of an effective telephone voice are:

Expressive

Use your voice to vary the tone of what you say and rate to make it interesting to hear.

Enunciate

Use clear enunciation and master articulation. We can be casual when speaking with friends or family, dropping a final consonant like the “g” in an “ing” ending or truncating the middle letters of a word. Unfortunately, when we do that on the telephone, the sound of these shortcuts gets exaggerated. Open your mouth and speak clearly.

Engage

Your voice should be smooth and pleasant, not whiny or negative. Communicate that you are happy in your work (and a happy person overall) in order to engage your customer. Speaking in anger or being curt will put your call – and your company – in a negative light.

Energize

Your voice needs to really shine when you use the telephone as your instrument. You need to feel energy and pass that positive flow through to your customers. This means that you approach your job as if it the only thing that matters right now, and that the customer you currently have on the line is the most important customer ever. Although it sounds corny and might feel uncomfortable, think about the salespeople you speak to in your own life, and what it was that led you to talk to them, buy from them, or made the conversation pleasant. Inject energy and joy into your voice and work from the attitude that you are there to serve your customer, and you will be more likely to meet your targets.

A Service Image

Do you give some thought to what is happening when you answer an incoming call from one of your customers?

Sales Professional	Robertsnanlewisnwehaveyerwinsheeldhullo.
Caller	Uh, hello, is this the windshield shop?
Sales Professional	Yathisizrobertsnanlewisnwehaveyerwinsheeldhowcanihelpyou?
Caller	I have an appointment Saturday to replace my windshield.
Sales Professional	Uhuh.
Caller	I need to confirm the time. I cannot remember the time.
Sales Professional	Justasecanilltranseryoutosomeoneelz.

Have you ever had an experience like that, where you call a number to find out some information and then cannot even tell if you’ve reached the right number because you cannot understand a word that’s being said? To the caller, the credibility of the organization is now in question.

The service image that you promote is just as important as the service itself. Even though the example above was not a sales call, you represent the company, and like it or not, the company pays you to promote their image.

The conversation should have gone like this:

Sales Professional	Robertson and Lewis. We have your windshield. How can I help you?
Caller	I have an appointment on Saturday, but I cannot remember the time.
Sales Professional	Let me pull up your record, sir. Can you please give me your telephone number?

Test Your Knowledge

Examples

The Good	The Great	The Not to Mention (Awful)

Identify the features of the good and great examples that make them that way.

To Serve and Delight

What You Say and What it Means

One easy mistake to slip into is to adjust your speech to what other people might expect. Whether you are new to the workforce or have been around a long time, you might find that your customers sometimes try to push your buttons. For example, they might swear and expect you to do the same. Or they might think that because you are from the same neighborhood or town, you can give them a deal.

The things that you say are a direct reflection on the company that you represent. Customers may not remember exactly what you say, but they will remember the service they receive. The qualities you display determine whether those customers will want to do business with your organization again.

When you talk with someone on the phone, you are the company.

Although you may be tempted (especially if you are talking to a regular customer or someone you know) never EVER speak badly of the company or any of your colleagues. We live in a small world and word of mouth, blast by text message, and social media are all effective ways for people to share any negative messages you may give them about your company. Even though you may be frustrated or you may know that a customer complaint is a result of a colleague's bad work habits, your customer does not need to know.

Planning the Ideal Answer

As a professional salesperson, we can benefit from set phrases that promote our own professionalism. Our customers benefit as they realize that we really are focused on their needs, which is what we want to continue to promote as part of our commitment to customer focused selling.

If you feel like saying:	Try this:
No problem.	

If you feel like saying:	Try this:
Is that it?	
That's just not possible.	
Oh, those guys in shipping are a waste of space!	
You should have called me yesterday.	
Aren't you the guy that never gets off the phone?	
You have to...	
That's not my job.	
I dunno.	
Honey, sweetheart, or love	
Swear word	

Exceptional Things about Telephone Sales

Working on the phone can be more challenging than in-person sales because you cannot use things like body language or physical proximity to your advantage. However, you can achieve more calls than in-person meetings in a day. If you are blending telemarketing with in-person sales, you need to master the telephone in order to set up your meetings.

Let's look at some other things that make telephone sales unique and exciting.

Keeping a Positive Outlook

Whether you are directly responsible for sales, or work within a sales support role, you are selling something. Support people may share information and, perhaps, the virtues of your company with a caller. These factors are all related to selling. When you have a relationship that is built on trust, your clients and customers will buy from you, even if you are simply asking permission to mail them information.

Telemarketing, or selling by the phone, has developed a very negative aura. People have added their names and telephone numbers to “do not call” lists to get away from the supertime phone calls of, “You have been selected for...” or, “We have a special offer on...”

Our goal here today is to realize that selling by phone is also a **reality of our marketplace**, and to help you be successful with it. You will spend all your time in your car if you are trying to drop in and meet with prospects, so the phone may be a useful tool to set up a face to face appointment, or it may be your primary means of making those sales.

There are **benefits** to selling by phone. For example, you may be able to speak to someone effectively in ten minutes instead of having to travel to meet them in person. In addition, you can have all of your notes and information spread out on your desk without distracting your customer.

When you are selling by phone, it is also important that you depersonalize the outcome. No one has a 100% closure (successful sale) rate, and you need to allow yourself time and space to learn the industry and develop your skills.

Rapport Building

A large component of your communication – and sales – success comes with your ability to build important relationships and to connect with people.

For many of us, the sweetest sound on earth is that of someone using our name correctly and positively. In contrast, however, we can sometimes be annoyed when sales people (whom we may not know) use our name too many times in a conversation. Despite some people’s negative feelings on this, the ability to remember names gives you an edge when it comes to interpersonal communication and career development.

Guidelines for Remembering Names

- Concentrate!
- Repeat the name out loud, right after you hear it. Try to find other opportunities to use it.
- Get some kind of visual reference. (Matt has thick hair like a mat.) These are not things you are ever expected to share with the person, so be as creative as necessary to create a visual memory.
- Group associate. Know where you met the person. Write it on their business card if you get one.
- Write the name down as soon as you can.
- Pay attention. That’s most important.

Building Trust

This is less about telephone sales in particular and more about sales in general. We buy from people that we trust.

Test Your Knowledge

How do we get other people to trust us, particularly if they have not had an opportunity to meet us face to face?

Defining Trust and Respect

Think for a moment about what trust and respect mean to you.

- **Trust** is expressed by a willingness to share ideas and feelings.
- **Respect** is demonstrated by a willingness to listen to the ideas and feelings of others.

We must remember that trust and respect are key elements in any good relationship. Without trust and respect, human relations break down. Both trust and respect are reciprocal. That is, you earn respect and trust when you are willing to respect and trust others.

It's More Than Just a Phase

Phases of Negotiation

A good understanding of the phases of negotiation is a great asset to a sales professional. Many of your customers likely want to negotiate with you to get the very best deal that they can. Although people often think that negotiating is the same as bargaining, it is not the case.

Negotiating is a process, and **bargaining** is one stage of that process. There are three other stages of negotiating, and those are tempered by timing, intuition, and flexibility. The delivery of your sales presentation, an exchange of information for services, adding on additional products (up-selling), cross-selling, and even looking for a raise, can be enriched by understanding how to effectively negotiate.

When the **negotiating formula** works well, the parties are more likely to work together with trust and respect in the agreement. With telephone sales, this process can take place very quickly or it can take place over a series of calls.



*(Adapted from Richard Shell, *Bargaining for Advantage: Negotiation Strategies for Reasonable People*, Penguin, 799)*

Preparation

Preparation is extremely important in negotiating. An inexperienced negotiator who is well prepared can successfully make their argument and win their case against a seasoned negotiator. In the preparation phase, negotiators need to review previous examples or other incidents that might have bearing on this situation. In this phase, parties will also decide to negotiate as a way to control their costs. When the cost of not negotiating a resolution is higher than the cost of negotiating one, negotiation can be the most desirable result.

Exchanging Information

This is not a step that many negotiators consider consciously, except perhaps in legal situations (where it is referred to as disclosure). But it plays a role even in negotiations at home and, certainly, in the workplace. Exchanging information is really an extension of preparation and allows both parties the opportunity to consider all of the available information before a bargaining conversation or meeting takes place.

Bargaining

This is the meat and potatoes part of negotiation. Bargaining is where interested parties go over their agreements and negotiate changes, sometimes one term at a time. This is the stage where hostility and anger can become evident, as the parties work on the fine details of an agreement. It is important that negotiators remain calm, professional, and relaxed during this phase. If negotiators lose their tempers or argue belligerently, the negotiations may fall apart; no progress is made if people are not speaking to one another.

There are times when an agreement in principle can lead to a long and protracted quest for agreement on smaller details. Those smaller details are worked out in bargaining, the phase where actual sacrifices and concessions are made.

Working out the finer details is common in divorce proceedings, for example. The divorcing couple may agree in principle that they will share custody of their children equally. The details, however, of deciding how to share the children during special occasions like birthdays, school holidays, or Christmas can become extremely difficult to work out, much more so than deciding other details, such as who is responsible for which amounts of debt or who gets the photo albums, CDs, or casserole dish.

Commitment and Closing

Once the parties have completed bargaining, made all the adjustments, and agreed upon the least uncomfortable result, the negotiation is ready for commitment and closure. This would be the time, for example, when you write a check as a deposit on a new car. It is also the time when a bargaining committee in a workplace would return to their membership with a new deal to be voted on.

Commitments can be made public (through a press release or some other media) as a way to share the conclusion of a process with the public. By this time, any hostility should be long over with, since the parties have moved to this stage following the conclusion of bargaining. At times, though, resentment can be close beneath the surface, so any positive steps that can continue to support relationship building are important at this time.

One final, important note in the process is to make absolutely sure that you have a commitment to carry out the agreement that has been negotiated.

Types of Negotiation

Negotiation can be categorized in different ways, since the parties can be looking for different things as they approach their negotiation. Let's look at some of the most common types of negotiation.

Integrative/Distributive

Integrative negotiations are commonly referred to as win/win; each side is working towards a solution where everyone wins something. They can make tradeoffs, look at multiple issues, and try to expand the pie rather than divide it. Integrative negotiations foster trust and good working relationships.

Distributive negotiations are referred to as win/lose negotiations. One party gets what they want, and the other party has to give something up. This can be the case when you negotiate a lease on office space, for example. If you feel like you got a good deal and the property manager had to give something up for you, then you won. If you feel like the property manager has the upper hand and you got ripped off, then you lost. The parties' interests often seem to be opposed (although this may not be the case once you look at things creatively), so this type of negotiation does not lead to lasting or positive relationships.

Inductive/Deductive/Mixed

Inductive negotiation means starting on small details and working upward until a settlement is reached. This can be the case where, for example, an employer and labor union are negotiating the details of an employee pension and investment plan. Small details are addressed one at a time.

Deductive negotiations start with an agreed-upon strategy. They rely on established principles and a formula to frame the negotiation while the parties work out the details.

Mixed negotiations are the most common; they are a blend of inductive and deductive methods.

Soft/Hard/Principled

Soft and hard bargaining involves negotiating a position, rather than interests. To avoid some of the more common problems associated with bargaining over positions, negotiators who take a soft approach treat the participants as friends, seeking agreement despite great cost, and offering concessions as a way to create or preserve a positive relationship with the other side.

A **soft** bargainer behaves transparently, sharing their bottom line, which can leave them vulnerable to a **hard** bargainer who is competitive, hides their bottom line, and offers few concessions, if any. In a negotiation between a soft and hard bargainer, the hard bargainer will almost always come out with a much better deal. In their book *Getting to Yes*, Roger Fisher, Bruce Patton, and William Ury recommend **principled** negotiation instead of hard vs. soft, because principled negotiation relies on interests rather than positions.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is a popular alternative to negotiation. If negotiations stall, the result can often be a move to **arbitration or litigation**. However, arbitration and litigation can be very expensive and time-consuming undertakings. Either of them can also result in a solution that neither of the parties is happy with (lose-lose) and both processes are full of friction.

ADR allows the negotiating parties to use a **formal dispute resolution process**. Using mediators or facilitation, parties work through the process together and try to come up with a winning solution. One factor that makes ADR different is the requirement that the negotiating partners must be satisfied with the outcome. If a stalemate results with proper use of ADR, then the negotiations can move to arbitration or litigation as a last resort.

Non-Negotiable Positions and Options

There are several ways that you can handle non-negotiable positions or options. As a negotiator, you must not go to the table with an intention like, "This is all the money we have, so this position is non-negotiable." If you dig your heels in on such a position, there will not be much point in negotiating at all. Similarly, if you elect to draw the line on a particular issue, you must know what your limits are and the room you actually have to negotiate.

For example, perhaps you approach your boss about a raise. The boss says no because he has no money left in the budget. Instead of giving up your idea of getting a raise (because you know that you have already earned it), consider whether there are other things that would satisfy you, like attending a conference, taking a course, or working fewer hours each week. If you are prepared with your justification for the raise before you approach your boss and you also have a few alternatives based on your knowledge of the need for training, the availability of a conference budget, and so on, your chances of success are much greater.

Other Tips

Just because someone says no to your request does not mean you have asked the only question that is available.

A good negotiator is prepared to use **several possible approaches and formulas**. They often ask questions rather than providing answers. They can assess a situation, including the expertise of the parties involved, and adapt formulas to suit the occasion.

For example, an employer's negotiator who comes to the table insisting that they have a winning formula for this round of negotiations will raise the defenses of the other party instantly, even if the formula would have been ideal. At the beginning of a negotiation, it is important to establish a formula that will be agreed upon between the parties. It is equally important to recognize when the formula is getting in the way of making progress because it is too rigid and needs to be tailored to the situation.

Communication Essentials

Active Listening Skills

Listening is not the same as hearing. When we are telemarketing, it is helpful to use specific techniques that help to strengthen listening skills.

Callers will often state that the reason they didn't get what they ordered, needed, or asked for was because a customer service representative or salesperson didn't hear what they said. Most of us understand how important it is to have good speaking skills. Few of us, however, are already skilled at listening when we join the industry.

Hearing is physical. Sound reaches the eardrum, creates vibration, and gets relayed to the brain. **Listening** is actually differentiating among those sounds and creating meaning from what you hear.

In its broadest sense, listening can be passive or active. **Passive** listening means looking like you are listening without giving the speaker your full attention. **Active** listening means that you are giving the speaker your full attention.

Here are some techniques that will help you listen actively. (You may want to copy these tips onto a reference card at your desk and keep it handy.)

- Clear your desk so that you have only the things nearby that help you to provide service to your callers.
- Have forms, notepads, pens, and any technical materials (like directories, reference material, and charts) nearby.
- Sit up straight at your desk (or stand straight) to allow you to breathe and operate efficiently.
- Be aware of sounds nearby. If there are loud noises or distractions, you might need to put a do not disturb sign on your door or desk. Turn off radios or loud machines that can distort noise during your phone call.

Test Your Knowledge

What other factors might you need to consider for your workplace?

Zero in on the Matter at Hand

In order to really listen to your callers, you must make a decision to pay attention to what they say.

Do:

- Be polite.
- Listen for cues (words that help explain what they want and need).
- Let them have their say.

Don't:

- Interrupt.
- Give in to your biases.
- Mix fact with feeling.

A Few Words about Biases

- We all have them.
- Identify your biases about people, places, and things.
- Acknowledge that, as a salesperson, your biases cannot influence your professional behavior. You must control, not act on, your biases.

The Mission: To Listen

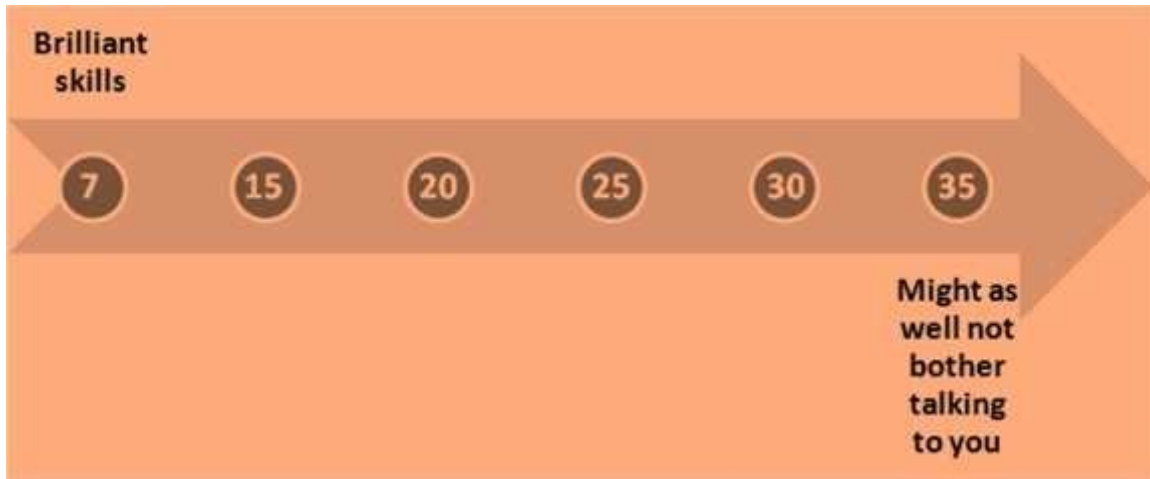
Some people seem to be naturally good listeners, while others have to learn how to listen. Even people who seem to be good listeners can have an off day. Perhaps you are someone who appears to be a good listener, but you are not really focused on the conversation.

Read the following statements and rate yourself on each one on a scale of one to five, where:

- 1=You never do that
- 2=You do that occasionally
- 3=You do it frequently
- 4=You do that most of the time
- 5=You do that all of the time

	My mind wanders when I talk with people on the phone.
	I know what people are going to say, so I interrupt them or finish their sentences.
	I tend to look around the room or check my watch when people speak to me.
	I am planning what to say next while the other person is still talking.
	I tend to organize my desk or read unrelated things if someone is talking too slowly or taking too long to explain something.
	My customers, co-workers, spouse, or friends tell me that I am not listening.
	I cannot remember details of a conversation long after it takes place.
	Total

Add your scores together and plot your total on the quality listening spectrum below.



What can you do in the next two weeks to improve your listening skills?

Ten Ingredients for Good Communication

Effective self-expression is very important when you are using the telephone to communicate. People cannot read your body language, so they must rely on the power of the spoken word.

There are ten key elements of effective telephone communication. The first eight we should work at all the time. The last two are of particular importance to those who must sell on the telephone.

Consider your greeting a verbal handshake.

When you meet a prospective client face-to-face, you are aware of that all-important first impression. However, sometimes we forget that when we call somebody for the first time, you are still making a first impression.

Test Your Knowledge

How can you make that impression positive?

Build vocabulary strength.

Words are your tools for thoughts and expressions. Many of us do not take advantage of the approximately half-million words in the English language. A mere nine words constitute 25% of the daily vocabulary of the average American (the, be, to, have, will, it, and, you, of). Add another 34 words and you have fully one-half of the average person’s daily vocabulary.

The effort to develop a good vocabulary is one of the best investments a person can make. It’s not necessary to use words to show off, but it can sure impress when you use words about your industry, your customer’s industry, and current events properly and well.

What are some ways we can build our vocabulary strength?

- Read more.
- Choose to search for the best words.
- Expand our use of words we already know.
- Reading a dictionary, doing crosswords, and taking a “new word a day” approach can all help us build a larger vocabulary.
- While we may not necessarily use all of our new words in one telephone call, in the long run this will help us communicate better with our prospects and with our clients.

Use the right words.

Stephen Covey, the well-known author of *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* has noted that some words are both self-defeating and depressing, while others are uplifting, energizing, and bridge-building.

Here are some ideas:

Self-Defeating/Depressing Words	Uplifting/Energizing Words
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The problems are... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is an opportunity to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's them... • It's the competition... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's us... • We can...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don't have the resources... • There isn't time... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here are some options: • Some choices are:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We must... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would be best?

Test Your Knowledge

Can you think of more examples?

Know when to stop talking.

Have you ever known somebody who talked so much that others stopped listening to them? If you talk too much, you may confuse your listener, overwhelm him with too much information, or bore him to the point where he stops paying attention.

Test Your Knowledge

Are there some techniques you can use to prevent talking too much?

This is one reason why we can benefit from using a script in our telephone calls. If we can keep our focus on making an appointment with our client, for example, we won't take up too much of the client's time, and we will have a better chance of meeting future objections and closing the sale in a face-to-face meeting.

Balance enthusiasm with control.

If you want to express yourself effectively, be emotionally involved in what you are saying. Enthusiasm will help you gain and keep your prospective buyer's attention. However, if you are so wrapped up in what you are saying that you get carried away, make exaggerated claims, or fail to get your listener involved too, then your emotions have risen beyond the optimum point, and your ability to communicate with another person is not as high.

How can we control our enthusiasm? Again, a script can help us with this. That initial telephone call isn't the time to let our enthusiasm for our product carry us away. We want to stick to the script.

Even when we are in the face-to-face meeting, we want to ask questions before we jump in to tell people how awesome our product or service is. We want to balance our enthusiasm with the ability to control ourselves and seek feedback from the prospect. Pay attention to your prospect's body language and ask for feedback

Think before speaking.

A good technique is to picture your prospective client in your mind and write out a script of what you plan to say. You don't have to follow your script exactly, but you can choose your words carefully, and perhaps make a better impression on your client. Scripting gives you a chance to think of the questions you want to ask your listener and keep you focused on why you are calling. You have a better chance of sounding confident and knowledgeable.

Test Your Knowledge

What else will help you think before you speak?

If you alter the script do so carefully. Remember, your ultimate goal is not to sell but to solve problems. If you do face-to-face meetings, you want to set up an appointment to explore how you can solve problems. Practice alone or with a partner so a prospect's questions or comments won't take you by surprise.

Consider your audience.

To build rapport with the prospective client, you will want to find some common ground. Perhaps you live in the same neighborhood, attend the same meetings, have mutual acquaintances, or enjoy the same sports. A bit of research ahead of time might help you make those connections more easily.

This is part of warming up your sales call. If you live in the same neighborhood, have kids in the same hockey team, or have mutual acquaintances, these can all help you make connections. You may prefer to wait until your face-to-face meeting to bring them up, but do bring them up. We are more apt to trust people when we have common ground between us.

Make actions support words.

Whatever you say you will do when you are speaking on the telephone to a prospective client, do it. Whether you have promised to send material, call back later, or follow up with another telephone call, don't break that trust you are beginning to build.

How should your actions support your words?

- If you say you will mail out literature, mail it out.
- If you make an appointment for Thursday at 10:00 a.m., be there!
- If you tell a prospect you will call them on Friday morning, call them on Friday morning.

Try not to get into an interview if you are simply calling for an appointment.

Ask questions for understanding.

Asking questions can give you a clearer idea of the challenges the person is facing, or how you can help him/her find some solutions. It can be argued that the six most important words a person can use are who, what, when, where, why, and how. These can be used in questions that can help you gather information, clarify facts, find out opinions, or encourage ideas.

What types of questions will help you gather information and find out a prospect's opinions? Some ideas:

- What are you presently doing in your company to address this situation/problem?
- What do you want to achieve?

Note that these questions are good ones to ask at a face-to-face meeting. If you are selling by telephone, they are good to ask during your second call.

Learn to paraphrase to validate what the other person is saying.

Paraphrasing can show the other person that you are listening, and understand his/her point of view. Paraphrasing can also reduce confusion and calm someone who is upset on the other end of the telephone.

Asking Good Questions

The salesperson's ability to ask the right question at the right time is as important as being a good listener. Often, your time will seem to be rushed, so it is important to have some questions ready that will help you through the call to serve your customers and clients.

Closed questions can be answered by either yes or no, or with a specific piece of data, such as your name, date of birth, occupation, etc. These questions restrict our responses and give us little opportunity to develop our thoughts. As a result, they require little effort and can even close down a conversation.

Perhaps not surprisingly, closed questions tend to get over-used, partially because they require very little effort on the questioner's part. They are easy to phrase and we get quick answers. Unfortunately, such questions also can lead us to make assumptions that can be barriers to good communication.

Open questions, on the other hand, encourage people to talk. These questions are phrased so they cannot be answered with a simple yes or no. Open questions often begin with a variation of the five Ws (who, what, when, where, why), or can ask "how."

Questions are used to:

- Get information
- Focus conversations
- Solicit opinions
- Gain consensus

The unintentional use of a closed question can often be overcome by following it with a simple open question. For example:

- "Do you feel that was the right thing to do?"
- "Yes, I do."
- "Can you help me understand why you feel that way?"

Probing

There are several different types of open-ended questions. The most useful are probing questions that search for more information and investigate in more detail.

Your role is to draw information from your customers and clients. This information is critical to your understanding. Most of us are better at presenting our own point of view than we are at drawing out information from others. A good name for the skill of gathering information from others is probing. When you probe, you:

- Get others involved and participating. Since probes are designed to produce a response, it's unlikely the other person will remain passive.

- Get important information on the table. People may not volunteer information, or the information they present may not be clear. Your probes help people open up, and present or clarify their information.
- Force yourself to listen. Since probes are most effective in a sequence, you have to listen to a person's response.
- Help improve communication on both sides of the table.

Here are some effective ways to frame a probing question.

Ask an open question, such as:

- "Can you describe that more clearly?"
- "Would you give me a specific example of what you mean?"
- "What do you think we should do?"

This is one of the most common ways of probing. The difficulty here is that if you ask too many of these kinds of questions, the other person can feel like they are under interrogation. Use them carefully and with the understanding that you are trying to make sure that your customer or client gets what he/she needs.

Another great questioning technique is to **pause**. Stop talking. Let the other person speak; you may find that the pause gives them enough time to collect their thoughts so that they can explain what they need.

You can also ask a **reflective or mirroring question**. For example, let's say the person has just said, "What I really want is more flexibility in your service," and you may respond by just reflecting back to them, "Flexibility?"

The reflective question usually provides you with an expanded answer without you appearing to ask more questions. Of course, it is best used in conjunction with a pause.

Reflective questions or statements focus on clarifying and summarizing without interrupting the flow of the conversation. They indicate your intent to understand the sender's thoughts and feelings.

The final helpful tip is to try **paraphrasing** what has just been said. You can use the framework, "So if I understand you correctly, you..." You can use this response to show that you want to increase the accuracy of your understanding of what has just been said, as well as what he has just said. Paraphrasing also reassures the sender that you are trying to understand what he is saying.

Developing your Script

The Basic Script

Actors use scripts, and so do speakers, trainers, and sales professionals. We use them because they are so effective. We recommend scripts that have six elements. When delivered properly, they can produce astonishing results.

The key parts of a script are:

- An attention statement
- An identification statement
- A people-respond-in-kind attitude
- A reason-for-this-call statement
- A request for an appointment
- Your response to objections

At this point we aren't trying to turn the prospect into a customer. We're at the very first stage of the contact. We don't know anything about the person we are talking to yet. If they aren't interested, or this call doesn't get results, we will politely disengage and move on. Before we do that, however, we do want to make one good solid attempt to break through all the natural resistance any person feels when they talk to a sales person over the phone.

Having said that, "no" answers are a part of the sales process and we really must get over taking that "no" personally. Don't waste your time spinning your wheels or trying to change that "no" into a "yes."

Let's look at all six elements of the cold call and see what can be done to make them easier to make and more successful.

Test Your Knowledge

Warm Up the Cold Call

First of all, can you think of some ways we can help people be a bit more pre-disposed to talk with us?

The Attention Statement

This is your verbal handshake and we want to make it as professional yet as friendly as we can make it. This is a prospect's first impression of us and our company. Keep your attention statement short and simple: **"Hello, Mr. Jones,"** or **"Good morning, Ms. Hendrix."**

Most importantly, this statement is courteous, includes the person's name, and allows us to move on to the next part of the call. Most of us pay attention when somebody addresses us by name, so make sure you have done some research if need be to get it right. This can be difficult to do, especially if we are a bit nervous, so practice. Be sure to get their name right. It is hard to bounce back from mispronouncing their name.

You may want to add, "Is this a good time to talk for a few minutes?" Since you are calling and interrupting their day, this additional courtesy is important to preserve.

The Identification Statement

This is where you tell the person you've called who you are and where you are calling from. Practice speaking slowly, clearly, and confidently. This statement is another single sentence that gets the job done for you. The person on the other end of the line can tell that you are purposeful, poised, and goal-oriented.

Example: **"My name is Judy Thomson and I work for Thomson Printing."**

A People-Respond-In-Kind Attitude

Remember that the attitude you project is reciprocal in nature. If it sounds like what you are offering a prospective client has value and may be mutually beneficial to them as well as to you, they will be asking themselves, "What's this all about?"

Don't waste their time at this point with idle conversation. Tell them who you are, what company you work for and then move on to "The Reason-for-this-Call" statement.

The Reason-For-This-Call Statement

You don't have a lot of time to convince the prospect that you do have something of interest to offer them; you have two well-worded sentences and that's about it. You want to focus on the potential benefit of what you have to offer and point out how your product or service has worked out well for another company, preferably one your prospect will have heard of. (Make sure you speak of a benefit, not a feature.)

Examples:

- "We are offering a special deal on flyers this month, and I think our prices could save you a lot of money. Telmark, just down the street from you, are getting us to print the flyers for their new outlet in Bayer's Lake."

- “We are introducing a new one-day workshop on Selling by Telephone and I thought you might find this useful training for your sales staff. We’ve just completed a workshop for Thomson Printing, and they feel they can increase their sales by at least 20% in the next month.”

A Request for an Appointment

This is what the call is all about if you do face-to-face selling. You’ve got the other person’s attention. They know who you are and who you work for. Now you’d like to set up an appointment to talk with the person about the company, their challenges, and how you can help them. Don’t even think of trying to close the sale at this point. It’s way too soon.

Examples:

- “I’d really like to talk to you about what we are offering. Would you be free on Thursday morning at 10:00 a.m.?”
- “I’d like to tell you more about this workshop and how it can help your staff. Would Thursday morning at 9:00 a.m. work for you?”

Your Response to Objections

First of all, look at the objections you hear. Did any of your current clients say something similar before they began working with you?

Chances are they did. If that is so, then take the risk, step out onto the ledge and say something like, “You know, that is similar to what other companies said before they began doing business with us and had a chance to see the benefits of our [product or service].”

After you’ve made your single attempt to demonstrate that you’ve been able to overcome similar objections before, you can ask a question. One popular approach is to ask what the company is currently doing/using. That question often works best if you use the introductory phrase, “I’m just curious.”

Example: “I’m just curious, Ms. Jones, what type of printing services are you using right now?”

Focusing on what they are currently doing or plan to do is usually far more effective than reciting all the benefits of your product or service.

Summary

This type of script is short and it’s simple. It gets right to the point and it doesn’t require much tailoring. Perhaps that is why it works so well. It ensures that you haven’t wasted their time and you haven’t wasted your time.

Sample Script

Here's another possible draft of the basic cold calling script, with the various steps marked.

Attention Statement	Hello, Ms. Jones.
Identification Statement	This is Tom Taylor from Acme Company here in San Francisco.
Reason For the Call Statement	The reason I'm calling is that we've just put together an exciting, customized software design package for United Consumer Products that allowed them to decrease their average time to market by 17%. It seemed to me that you might be interested in taking a look at maximizing efficiency in your design work, too.
Request the Meeting	I'd like to get together so we could take a look at your organization's product design work and tell you about the success we've had with United Consumer Products. Is Monday at 1 p.m. good?
Assume the prospect offers an objection: "We handle all of that on our own," "The software we have is fine," "We're just not interested," or any of the other common roadblocks you run up against (and overcome) on a regular basis.	
Objection Response (Ledge) Statement	Can I tell you something? That's exactly what the people at United Consumer Products told us when we first approached them about taking a look at a new software program. I'm just curious, what kind of design system are you using right now?
Assume the prospect responds, either with information that directly relates to your question – a good sign – or a restatement of (or variation on) the previously stated objection.	
Second Request	You know, I have to tell you, Ms. Jones, from what I've been able to gather about your company, I really think we'd both have something to gain from trying this solution. You are not obligated to sign up beyond the thirty-day trial period, and our customer service staff are here to help you any time you have questions.

That's the outline. Although there are a few minor variations on this telemarketing approach (and we'll look at those exceptions in just a minute), for the vast majority of selling situations you'll run into, the concise, step-by-step approach laid out above represents the single most efficient way for you to set up appointments with new prospects.

Making the Script Yours

As plainspoken as the script may seem, it really works. You don't need to turn it upside down or adapt only one aspect of it to your selling routine. Give it a try for a fair amount of time, in accordance with the personal target numbers that reflect your own goals. In other words, if your income objective results in a daily requirement of ten discussions with decision makers every day, use the script until you've talked with ten people who grant you the sale or booking you want. If you're like most salespeople, you'll need to make 20 calls to reach those ten decision makers. (If you decide to focus on total calls rather than contacts with decision makers, set a target based on your own numbers and objectives and keep calling until you hit the goal.)

A few other tips:

- **Practice** the whole script from beginning to end. Deliver it to a colleague and ask for a helpful critique afterward. Hone the script. Tighten it up. Make it direct. Make it confident. Make it yours.
- **Stick to the script.** Don't embellish it or expand on it. If you do, you will find yourself asking frivolous or irrelevant questions. Worse, you can be tricked into selling add-on items or rewriting the offer.
- **Ask directly for the sale**, no matter how difficult that might seem at first.

While we strongly recommend you don't make many changes to the script we have suggested, there are exceptions when you may want to customize a script to take advantage of the circumstances.

Referral Script

Attention Statement	Hello, Mr. Jenkins.
Identification Statement	This is Barb Miller from Zap Computer Company here in San Francisco.
Reason For the Call Statement	The reason I'm calling is that I've just spoken to Carl Hood, and he suggested that you and I talk about your upcoming computer system purchase. I'd like to get together with you to see how what we offer might fit into your plans. Is Monday at 1:30 p.m. good for you?
Prospect offers an objection.	
Response to Objection	Can I tell you something? That is exactly what the people at ABC Company said when we first approached them about taking a look at a new computer system. I'm just curious, what kind of system are you using right now?
Prospect responds with a restatement of the objection and/or some new information.	
Second Response to Objection/Request for Sale	You know, I have to tell you, Mr. Jenkins, from what I've been able to gather about your company, I really think we can help you improve your (insert the improvement). I can set you up with a thirty-day free trial if you are interested, so you have nothing to lose. Would you like me to send you some information (or an Internet link) about the product so that you can have a closer look?

Rarely/Never See the Potential Client

Attention Statement	Hello, Ms. Haines.
Identification Statement	This is Dave Stephens from Broadside Magazine here in New York.
Reason For the Call Statement and Request for Appointment	The reason I'm calling is that we have been able to deliver some great results for companies such as yours. Triple Diamond Cheeses had a 25% increase in their orders after a three-month advertising campaign in our magazine. I'd like to schedule a time where we could talk in detail about your advertising needs over the next six months. Is Friday at 1:30 p.m. a good time to call, or would you rather talk now?
Prospect offers an objection.	
Response to Objection and Second Request	Can I tell you something? That's exactly what the people at Triple D told us before they had a chance to talk with me about the programs we're offering. I'd like to schedule a time when we can talk in detail about your advertising needs for the next six months.
Prospect responds with a restatement of the objection and/or some new information.	
Third Request for Appointment	You know, I have to tell you, Mr. Jenkins, from what I've been able to gather about your company, I really think we can help you improve your (insert the improvement). I can set you up with a thirty-day free trial if you are interested, so you have nothing to lose. Would you like me to send you some
	information (or an Internet link) about the product so that you can have a closer look?

Polishing the Script

Here are some tips on practicing:

- Find a tape recorder or use the voice recorder on your computer and record yourself in an imaginary call. Record each element of your call and either imagine or impersonate your prospect as well.
- Practice with a partner. Take turns playing the role of the prospective client. Throw each other some curve balls.
- Listen to the tone of your voice as you practice. Make sure you vary the sound of your voice. Nobody wants to listen to a monotone.
- Do you sound confident and professional? If you don't, practice until you do.
- Are you following your script? If you find yourself asking questions you never intended to ask or including more chatter than you planned, go back to more role playing until you feel comfortable with the recommended script format.
- Once you become comfortable with your script, try to practice a few imaginary calls each day before you get down to the serious business of calling, just to get yourself warmed up and in the mood.

Pre-call Planning

When you use your telephone to make sales calls, there is one single factor that pays off more than any other: **pre-call planning**.

You must plan your telephone sales call as carefully as you would face-to-face presentations. Most telephone calls fail because of this lack of planning. So many salespeople place the call first and then attempt to handle the situation by ear. This won't work!

Before the end of today, pre-call companies you are planning to call tomorrow. Find out who you should be talking to, get the correct spelling and pronunciation of his/her name, and if you can, get that person's direct number.

This way, when you call the next morning, you may get to talk to the person you are calling directly. If you can't get to talk with the person themselves, craft a distinctive voice mail message that will leave the door open for a return call from your contact, or pave the way for your follow-up call.

Tip: Try the early morning technique. You will be pleasantly surprised at how many decision-makers answer their own phone early in the morning.

Phone Tag and Call Backs

While technology that is available today can make it harder for you to reach the decision maker, it can also offer you some opportunities. Two of the most important tools are call tracking plans and voice mail. One thing everyone should be doing is keeping track of who we have called and how often we have called them.

One thing we should be doing is keeping track of who we have called and how often we have called them.

Test Your Knowledge

What type of call tracking plan do you have?

What would you consider the right number of callbacks in a week?

In a month?

When we do take advantage of voice mail and leave a message, there are four strategies we can use that help us make our message more effective.

Option One: The Referral

This is the best option when you have the opportunity to use it. However, it must be an honest referral. If you leave a message like the following example, you will usually get a response.

Example: “Hello Mr. Fields, I was talking to Joe Sampson and he suggested I give you a call because I offer _____ service and he mentioned that you are looking for this. When you get a chance, please call me at 901-555-2120.”

Option Two: The Third-Party Message

This option is useful if you are working for company ABC and you have delivered excellent results for them. You know that company XYZ is in the same type of business, would know the name of company ABC, and could probably use the same type of services/products. You will want to sound poised, confident, and concise.

Example: “Hello Ms. Jones, I’m calling regarding Company ABC. When you get a chance, could you please call me at 901-555-2120?”

Option Three: The Warm Cold Caller

The script sounds something like this: “Hello Ms. _____. This is Freda Whitehouse with ABC Company calling. My number is 901-555-2120, and I can be reached at this number between nine and noon, Monday to Friday. I was told you are the person to speak to about _____, and I’d really appreciate the chance to chat with you about it. My number is 901-555-2120.”

Option Four: The Straight-Ahead Pitch

Use this when no other techniques are available to you. You’ve tried early morning calling, you’ve tried enlisting the help of the receptionist/secretary/assistant, and this is your final attempt of the month to

reach this person. You simply adapt your standard cold calling script, which you have already prepared. It might sound something like this.

Example: “Hi Ms. Jones, this is Freda Whitehouse with ABC Company calling. I’m sorry I missed you today. We just put together an interesting (training package, computer program, Web site, etc.) for XYZ Company so they could spend less time dealing with employee conflict, tracking results, and providing general information to interested customers. I thought something like this might work well for your company too. If you are interested and want to learn more about how we can help, I’d like to get together to talk about it a bit. Would this Friday at 2 p.m. work for you?”

Tips

Whatever response option you choose, prepare your script and practice until you can deliver your message in a professional, confident, and friendly tone of voice, without hesitation.

Before making your first sales call of the day, prepare yourself and your environment for the task.

Don’t be surprised if you get a call back but the caller has not listened to your message. When crunched for time, people will check their call display and make calls, but they might not listen to messages, especially if they are lengthy.

Following Up

After working hard to cover your market, be sure to keep a record of your calls and results. Be sure to plan a callback at a future date to those prospects who indicate an interest, but who can’t meet with you now.

Avoid missed opportunities by doing the following immediately after each call:

- Record any notes and update the contact’s information in your database. You may be able to do this during the call if you use a headset.
- Record the date of your appointment and directions (if required) in your calendar.
- Make sure that you also allow for driving time in your calendar.
- Be prepared to fulfill any commitments made to the contact during your call.

Surprisingly, many sales people do not consciously track tasks and calls that they need to follow up. As a result, they struggle to meet their goals every month. Successful sales people understand the power in working with a warm prospect, and providing prompt and efficient follow up. Don’t lose opportunities because you are not organized.

Use the space below to sketch out a template for your ideal follow-up tracking sheet or form.

Closing the Sale

Asking for the Sale

Does an objection mean no? No, thank goodness! An objection means that your prospect has heard enough to ask some questions or offer thoughts on what you are saying. An objection is actually a better buying indicator than a client who says nothing at all.

Did you know that...

- 63% of sales are made after the fifth touch – and all five of those touches may have been rejections. (Many customers don't buy until after 8 touches; some as many as 12!)
- 75% of salespeople quit after the first rejection.

These numbers explain why 20 percent of the sales force often produces 80 percent of the sales. People who are persistent, have a plan, and want to provide customer focused service have better sales results.

Every day, thousands of sales are made to people who, when first asked to buy, said “no.” You will find a large percent of prospects who will offer objections and if you are prepared, you will be able to answer these objections without hesitation or embarrassment. An objection doesn't need to be considered as the end of an unsuccessful contact, but merely as a roadblock which must be cleared away.

Therefore:

- Do not object to objections; they are a very good sign. They indicate that the prospect is listening and thinking about what you are saying.
- It is only human that we all first think of why we should not be interested and then we start to consider why we should.
- As long as you have your list of anticipated objections with answers prepared before you start the call, you will be ready to handle anything.

Closing the Sale

Remember that you can't make a buyer do anything, including making a decision to buy. Besides, trying to force somebody to do something they don't want to do is not only unethical, but it may work against you in the long run.

Textbooks will give you all sorts of suggestions for closing the sale. However, if you have two or three that you use and use well, this can work in your favor. If you have too many techniques that you think might work, you may come across as unsure and indecisive. Use what works for you. Remember, whether the answer is yes or no, find out why.

If you presently have no strategies at all, try these.

Direct Questions

- Are we ready to move ahead on this?
- When can we get started?
- Shall I write up the order?

The Ben Franklin Approach

Take a sheet of paper, divide it in half, and write up the pros on one side of the sheet. Then you invite the buyer to write up the other side with cons. This close can be effective for the undecided buyer who just needs to get everything in perspective. However, use it with caution. If you get the sense the buyer doesn't want to do this, drop it immediately.

The “Leave It with Them for the Weekend” Close

Whether it's a new puppy, a photocopier, or a TV, leaving the product with the buyer for the weekend is an option that often works. They get to try it out on their own and pretty soon they are coming up with their own reasons why they should buy this.

Persistence Pays Off

While you don't want to become a pest, you also don't want to assume a “no” today is a “no” for a lifetime. Some salespeople will tell you they expect five rejections before they get the green light. While that may or may not be the right number of rejections to expect, do expect rejections. Learn from them. Then use what you've learned when you go back to try again.

You can also use the “no” client as a source of referrals. Although they are not buying from you, they may know someone who can use your product or service and be willing to refer you to them. It can't hurt to ask.

Thank You Notes

Never underestimate the power of the thank you note. If you get the sale, send them a note thanking them for their order. If you don't get the sale, send them a note thanking them for taking time to meet with you.

Polishing the Script

Here are some tips on practicing:

- Find a tape recorder or use the voice recorder on your computer and record yourself in an imaginary call. Record each element of your call and either imagine or impersonate your prospect as well.
- Practice with a partner. Take turns playing the role of the prospective client. Throw each other some curve balls.

- Listen to the tone of your voice as you practice. Make sure you vary the sound of your voice. Nobody wants to listen to a monotone.
- Do you sound confident and professional? If you don't, practice until you do.
- Are you following your script? If you find yourself asking questions you never intended to ask or including more chatter than you planned, go back to more role playing until you feel comfortable with the recommended script format.
- Once you become comfortable with your script, try to practice a few imaginary calls each day before you get down to the serious business of calling, just to get yourself warmed up and in the mood.