

Effective Selling Skills

Graham Roberts-Phelps

*He worked by day
And toiled by night
He gave up play
And some delight.
Dry books he read
New things to learn,
And forged ahead
Success to earn.
He plodded on
With faith and pluck,
And when he won
they called it luck.*

Anon

Effective Selling Skills.....	1
Personal organisation.....	3
Prospecting	4
Telephone appointment making.....	5
Planning and preparation before the call	6
Opening the call	7
Questioning.....	8
Presenting.....	9
Handling objections	10
Closing the sale and follow-up	11

Organising means orders

- Utilise the essential organisation tools diary/personal organiser, customer and prospect 'records', maps, territory plan and all appropriate sales aids.
- Plan your sales territory based on achieving optimum use of selling time, maximum coverage and greatest penetration of potential.
- Plan your day by starting at the same or earlier time every day, avoiding unnecessary disruptions and by a disciplined operation of your journey plan.
- Make a daily list and prioritise - *must* be done *should* be done or *could* be done.
- Schedule the 'musts' for the time when you know you are mentally at your most capable (usually a.m.).
- Allocate time for each priority and include 'time to think'.
- Research and qualify your prospects.
- Make appointments and keep all records up to date.
- Organise and prepare yourself fully before every call, never ever resorting to playing it 'off the cuff'.
- Keep up to date with all changes and developments relative to your product, your company, your customers and your prospects.

PROSPECTING

Finding new customers or opportunities

- First ensure that your *attitude* to prospecting is right. Be positive - it will produce additional business!
- Utilise existing customer records for potential 'leads'.
- Generate *referrals* from as many sources as appropriate to your product or service.
- Look to the 'competition' for prospects, particularly when the market or economy is not expanding.
- Study your market-place and 'list' where you will find potential *new* prospects for your product or service.
- Use prospecting material that will provide the right information.
- Classified directories, trade reference lists and Chamber of Commerce directories are but a few. Visit the Public Library.
- Use local and national newspapers; they provide a fund of useful and qualified lead information. For example 'Vacancies at our "new branch"...'
- Prospect as an 'additional' activity during a day of firm appointments. And as a 'main' activity when firm appointments are scarce.
- Plan your prospecting as 'warm' calling, not as 'cold' by identifying possible need areas *before* your approach.
- Concentrate on the most effective prospecting approach - 'by appointment'.

TELEPHONE APPOINTMENT MAKING

Following the structure

- Find and 'qualify' the prospect.
- Discover, through research, as much as possible prior to phoning.
- Sometime before, telephone to make sure you will be calling the right person. Obtain a 'first name'.
- Make the appointment call confidently, asking to speak with John Smith (not Mr Smith), responding similarly if asked. Follow the structure.
- Introduce yourself with courtesy and politeness.
- State the reason for your call.
- **The key** - introduce a likely problem or need based on pre-call research. For example, 'Your expansion is no doubt putting strains on distribution'.
- **Turning the key** - indicate how you could possibly help in solving the problem or satisfying the need. But remember, 'sell the appointment not the product'.
- Ask for the appointment (or the right to advance if selling by phone) suggesting an alternative time or date or benefit.
- Record all the details, noting particularly any special 'new' points revealed during the call.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION BEFORE THE CALL

Setting the objectives and more

- With the appointment verbally agreed, thank and confirm in writing.
- Set your call objective(s).
- Carry out any additional research necessary to ensure complete familiarity with your prospect's business and potential needs.
- Prepare yourself for what you will say when 'opening the call'.
- Note the 'key' questions you will want to ask during the call.
- Anticipating every possibility, gather together all the sales 'support aids' you might need - or be asked for.
- Anticipate possible or likely objections and how they will be handled.
- Just prior to the call, check on possible operational or supply pressures, should call objectives be achieved.
- Allocate sufficient time for the appointment, to cater for all contingencies.
- Check location and make sure you know the route.

OPENING THE CALL

Gaining attention and creating interest

- Gain attention by greeting your prospect courteously, politely and with a smile.
- Introduce yourself and the company you represent. Develop a rapport.
- Thank your prospect for seeing you and break the ice sensitively by referring perhaps to a natural observation you might make. For example, 'A busy day for you!'
- Create interest by recalling the possible need or problem area, that was the subject of your making the appointment.
- And remind your prospect that you had suggested you might be able to 'help'.
- Remember to confirm that you are talking to the decision-maker or someone who is influential in the decision-making process.
- Introduce, at an appropriate moment, something that will give added credibility to you, for example, other known companies with whom you deal.
- Lead the conversation in the direction of the next stage of the call - questioning stage.
- Avoid resistance to investigating need areas, by indicating a 'benefit' in doing so. For example, 'We have just helped to resolve a similar situation with Collins International'.
- Follow with your request to ask questions and make notes.

QUESTIONING

Discovering needs, problems and opportunities

- Ask questions in order to discover and establish needs, problems and opportunities, or - if previously established - the extent.
- Ensure questions are relevant to your prospect's 'likely' need or problem areas.
- Use an effective mix of open and closed questions utilising initially, your previously prepared key questions.
- Remember, open ended questions begin with who, what, why, when, where, which and how, which unlike closed questions cannot be answered by 'Yes' or 'No'.
- Begin the questioning stage with open questions which are designed to obtain information and to stimulate conversation.
- Listen to the answers by really concentrating.
- Use the answers to your initial key questions to ask further in-depth probing questions.
- Support 'probing' with leading questions. For example 'You'd prefer that wouldn't you?' And consequence indicating questions, 'What would happen if...?'
- Summarise the picture painted, starting with the present and looking to the future.
- Finally, move naturally from questioning to presenting by projecting the process forward with a bridging question. For example, 'If I could show you...?'

Matching benefits to needs

- Remember, the aim of the presentation stage is to match the benefits of your product or service with the problems, needs or opportunities discovered during questioning.
- Use the same logical 'structure' to make your presentation as that which you used when summarising the questioning stage.
- Select only the features of your product or service that are appropriate to the prospect's particular situation.
- Convert features into customer-related benefits using the link phrase - "which means...". Remember that people only buy what products or services will do for them.
- An example of the above is: 'Our ashtrays, Mr Hotelier, are made of ¼-inch glass (Feature), making them somewhat unattractive, which means that as well as being functional - they won't keep disappearing (Benefit).'
- Support throughout with sales aids and where appropriate by 'demonstration', allowing the prospect to participate.
- Make it personal by relating your whole presentation to your prospect's 'key' concern.
- Convey an image of professionalism by balancing enthusiasm, with confidence - via a thorough knowledge of product benefits. But "keep it simple".
- Obtain commitment on each point presented or demonstrated by directly asking for agreement.
- Summarise and move towards 'the close'.
- Handle questions well and probe to uncover hidden concerns and issues.

HANDLING OBJECTIONS

Reassuring the customer

- Approach objections positively, as either a lack of understanding, desire to be convinced or natural resistance to change or a lack of perceived 'value'.
- Defer early objections till later into the conversation.
- Acknowledge objections as they arose and used appropriate question customer to develop or 'minimise' the concern and isolate and to check if genuine.
- Prepare answers to anticipate objections.
- Listened and probe carefully before rushing into to answer objections
- Prompt the customer for questions (i.e. objections) in order to draw issue's and concerns
- Use empathy, rephrasing and active listening to encourage the customer to talk and show concern.
- Refer anonymously to other customers to help answer or overcome objections or questions.
- Repeat key feature and benefit statements to help outweigh any drawbacks or concerns in the customer's mind.
- Generally welcome and encourage objections as stepping stones leading to the close.

Helping the customer make a decision.

- Notice and respond to “buying signals”.
- Ask for agreement or a decision, clearly and confidently at the end of the sales appointment.
- Before closing briefly summarised key features and benefits for choosing and using Vodafone.
- Close or ask for commitment at an appropriate time - without putting undue pressure on the customer.
- Use trial closing questions to 'test' by projecting the customer's mind ahead with “what if” or “how does that sound?”
- Before closing or attempting to gain commitment, I establish credibility by using a third party reference to illustrate a similar decision.
- Ask for the decision or some form of commitment, use silence effectively and appropriately.
- Regardless of what commitment was gained. clearly state and document the “next steps” for both the customer and myself.
- Set clear objectives and agree a follow-up telephone call or visit.
- Ask for referrals as appropriate.