How to Double Your Sales Appointments in Half the Time; Part 4

Contributed by Jeff Hardesty
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Here are the final 3 ‘Sales Prospecting Errors’ that lead to low sales appointment success. Find out how to avoid the ‘Slippery Slope’ of low sales appointment conversion ratios.
{mosbotwordcount}How to Double Your Sales Appointments in Half the Time; Part 4

{bot_wrgoogle} In Part 3, How To Double your Sales Appointments in Half the Time, we reviewed and remedied the first 3 sales prospecting errors that start us down the ‘Slippery Slope’ to low Sales prospecting conversation ratios.

So let’s continue to address the final 3 sales prospecting errors, discuss some proven solutions that will head us toward our worthy goal of spending Less time to achieve more targeted ‘Top-down’ sales appointments.

Sales Prospecting Error #4

We fail to develop an effective Call to Action; strategic words and phrases that create a positive 'visual' reference to the Prospect of what happens during the initial appointment and how long it takes.

Develop your Call to Action communication as a visual block of time in which a ‘Step-by-step’ process occurs with the objective of having your ‘Top-down’ prospect inform you they perceive enough of a potential benefit to take the next step in your evaluation process.

How long does it take to run your 1st appointment in your current sales process; 30, 45, 60 minutes? I’d estimate in the small to medium size B-to-B arena the average 1st appointment timeline is about 35 minutes. That is to re-cap why you are there, to inquire about their current state of the union, to overview your solution offering and to gain commitment for the next step in your sales process.

But if you ask a business person with fiscal authority for more than 15 minutes of their time initially, your closing ratios on a sales prospecting call will go down dramatically.

I don’t know the scientific reason why, but I do understand the logical explanation. These business people are busy. It’s that simple. Every minute of the day is accountable to moving closer to their business objective. There is ‘No room in the Inn’ for distractions that are not in line with their business objectives.

Especially the idea of “Meeting with some stranger that is only interested in selling me something that I don’t need just so they can make a living”.

Because in their minds, if they knew something was broken, they’d already have gone in and fixed it.

Ultimately your key objective for the 1st appointment is to ‘Gain Commitment to Take the Next Step’ in your sales process, whether that step is a diagnostic survey, a demo, a site visit or a proposal. But when your sales prospecting methodology is a ‘Top-down’ approach, these C-level prospect contacts do not get into the nitty-gritty of your evaluation process. They won’t walk you through the office opening up closet doors to evaluate telephone systems or help you pull current service invoices from file drawers. They want to understand what’s in it for them from a financial aspect, what your diagnostic process looks like in order to see if the solution fits and what timelines there are to see the results. And they don’t like major change.

But if your 15-minute Call to Action communication is effective, they will delegate these tasks to a lower level to effectively conduct the evaluation to qualify if your solution offering will help them with their business challenges. By them delegating down, it will help you minimize any service bias within the organization with non-decision makers. And that lowers sales cycles and increases sales closing ratios.

In summary, frame up your Call to Action under the theme of ‘The Business Reason to Meet’ and visually communicate the steps in your diagnostic process, the potential benefits (Along Economic terms in line with Business challenges) and what they will get in return for the time invested in the 15-minute face-to-face appointment.

Sales Prospecting Error #5

We don’t support our ‘Call to Action’ with 3rd party valuators parallel to the Prospects business objectives; valuators like business statistics, appointment performance ratios, ROI figures and relevant success stories.

Here’s a hard-knock lesson on sales prospecting conversations and one you need to put to memory.

A targeted Business prospect does not care what you think. I repeat; they do not care what you think or what you personally want. After all, they don’t know you yet…and that’s fair. That’s the reality of the moment. After they get to know you, they will respect you’re personal perspective on what you feel is good for them, but not now. It’s too soon. Got It?

Here’s my point. How many times have you heard someone talking to a prospect and communicating the words, “Here’s what I’d like to do”, or “I think you should have me come in to meet and …”, or “In my experience, here’s what I’ve seen.”

Get my point? We already realize we are perfect strangers to this target prospect, so why should we reference what WE think or what WE have found to work. It’s not valid data. So here’s the golden rule:

Avoid 1st Party references when communicating on a sales prospecting call.

Replace 1st Party references with 3rd Party Valuators.

When you communicate the ‘Business Reason to Meet’, back it up with real numbers; business data like your own conversion ratios of helping prospects become clients or your overall company’s ratios. What about condensed case studies of current customers that hold the same title of responsibility in the same industry? Or how about accumulating business ROI statistics in relevant modules in line with prospect business issues and challenges?

3rd party references to support the ‘Business Reason to Meet’ should be specific and applicable to your Prospect’s world, and not visually project a one-sided salesperson view or a marketing brochure.

Sales Prospecting Error #6

We fail to document all possible Objections and develop Powerful communication templates to negotiate 3rd Solutions.

“There are only a finite amount of scenarios in any selling process and if you identify, train to and measure each and every one, you are on your way to excellence.”

That statement I coined some years back is especially true in a sales prospecting conversation.

It means there are only a finite number of objections you encounter over the telephone when attempting to set a 1st appointment with your Target contact.

Statements like, “Send me some information”, and “I don’t handle that…so and so does”.

Or what about the popular, “I’m happy with my current Vendor” and ‘I’m under a Contract”?

Identify all of them and develop Powerful communications templates in line with each one.

Perception is Reality.

Your target sales prospects initially will put you into a ‘Perception bucket’ you do not belong in and you can't afford to be in. They want to fit you into a past experience, good or bad. It's up to you to differentiate yourself from the very beginning when directly responding to concerns and objections spoken, unspoken, or implied.

‘Systemize’ your Sales Prospecting System into individual Components and Elements and ‘Practice before you Preach’.

You’re only as good as the intellectual capital you share throughout your sales organization. That will keep you ahead of the competition.

Understand the 6 errors that have been discussed in this article series and decide to do the opposite. Develop best practices and business communication paths parallel to each possible scenario. Because best practices are techniques that through experience and measurement more often than not lead to the desired result.

Then invest in the technology to bundle it up into a learning system that you can become certified to, adopt it and adapt it over time.

We understand why Professional athletes practice prior to the event. Professional sales people need to do the same.

Because if you can double the amount of targeted sales appointments and spend half the time achieving it, it will save you a bunch of valuable time, make you more money and get you the recognition you deserve.

And that’s a worthy cause indeed.

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