

Positive vibes...

**There's no reason to ever dread
telesales campaigns, according to
DAVID FESTENSTEIN**

Telesales can be a really soul-destroying activity when it is approached with a 'spray and pray' mentality, which often leads to poor results in revenue terms and an annoying experience for the prospective customer. People also look down on telesales as low-level type of work but, ironically, good telesales people are worth their weight in gold. They are able to make impact with board level directors within seconds to develop new client relationships and produce a regular stream of revenue that can be the bedrock of the business.

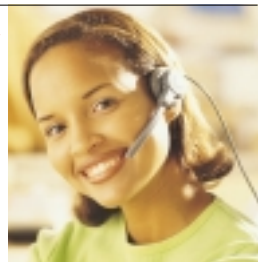
Having gone through this 'pain' during many years of telephone selling, I would like to suggest some specific areas which can help you make the work more fulfilling and get the outcomes you want. Look for models of excellence... find someone

in your team or company who does what you want to achieve really well. Copy their processes but also try to understand their mental strategy that keeps them going and get consistently outstanding results. Discover what makes them the Schumacher of telesales!

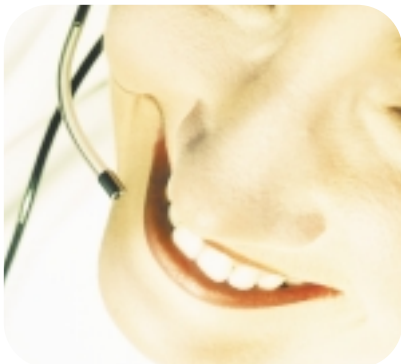
Make sure you are in the right forest and you are prospecting in the right areas! It might sound obvious, but if you are using lists, make sure data is up-to-date before making your calls. Unlike the spray and pray approach, make sure that you target companies who are most likely to buy from you. Be very clear about why people buy from you as opposed to your

competition. If you are at all unsure about this, go back to your existing customers and ask them. This will give you invaluable information to enhance the profile of your most likely to buy prospects.

**“Look for models of
excellence... someone in
your team or company
who does what you want
to achieve really well”**



- Have a valid business or listening reason to call in the first place
- Do your homework about the prospective customer before your call
- Look on their website for recent press releases or at their latest interim report to see if there is some link to the



product or service you provide. If not, think about the work you have done for their competitors or other companies in their sector.

Ask for help from executive PAs to find out who really makes the decisions! Call the Chief Executive's assistant or Financial Director's PA

"If you hit a voicemail... don't simply leave a message about your company and product, as they are very unlikely to call back"

for their help and build a relationship with them so they become 'gate-openers' instead and actually help you gain access to your decision-maker. If you have a reason for him to listen, you will feel more confident about working with him rather than having the attitude that you are



s t r u g g l i n g against him. In this way, you can work within his own boundaries and get him to accept an e-mail (which can be shown to decision-makers) requesting a specific time to speak to him, or a brief telephone meeting.

Engaging with the decision-makers

If you are starting conversations from cold with decision-makers, talk about them and their business – not yours! Notice how the decision-maker sounds and his specific style of communication, and try to match this as much as possible. Your delivery is all-important in the first few seconds of the call and this is made up of your tone, volume, speed, pitch and, above all, energy.

Your delivery will account for 70 per cent or more to the impact of the call, so it is not so much *what* you say but *how* you say it.

Learn how to read the prospect's voice tone as the call progresses. This will be an excellent substitute for not being able to read body language. If you can acknowledge the changes in his tone, this will let

him know that you are really listening and understand his view of the world. This can be very powerful in building rapport very rapidly and make you very different from the 'scripted presenter'.

Monitor and record your calls

Listen to how you present over the phone and learn from it. Notice whether you are really in rapport with the other person or in your own product/service world! This will also help you to get rid of bad habits such as so-called 'word whiskers' – the 'ahs' and 'ums', as well as word repetition and regression (halting a sentence half way through and starting again).

Avoiding these bad traits will enhance your delivery and impact of your call. Also, when your energy drops after repeated calling you will know when to take a break!

Monitor your results so you can see what works and when it works. Make sure you record the result of your calling – how many calls you have made, how many people you spoke to, how many meetings you set up or how many sales you have made.

Are you still calling people who are giving you the 'runaround' and will never buy? In that case you need to find a list of new prospects for your pipeline – don't waste your precious time! Know your conversion ratios so you can set yourself targets.

From this you can see whether you are exploiting 'Prime time' when your decision-makers are often most easy to get hold of. >>

with your valid business reason. For example, you might say: "I was interested to read that you recently opened an office in Newcastle. Who would be the right person to speak to about providing the appropriate (staff/office supplies)?"

If you hit a voicemail, make reference to the conversation you have had with the CEO's PA and perhaps mention your valid business reason again. Don't simply leave a message about your company and product, as they are very unlikely to call back. If possible, match the style of their communication when you leave the message. When you end the message after requesting them to return the call, say something like: "I look forward very much to speaking to you."

Opening the gate

It is vital to change your view of PAs as 'blockers' or gatekeepers. Ask them



Make sure you close that sale

Once your prospect agrees to buy, ensure that you get this confirmed in writing with all the necessary details such as a purchase order number. If you are selling advertising space, ensure you request the copy. If you are selling a product, ask for delivery details. Make no assumptions that you have the sale until it is 'truly in the bag'!

Beware of your legal obligations

There are three areas that you should be aware of when using telesales:

- 1 If you are recording or monitoring calls you must comply with the Ofcom regulations. See www.ofcom.org.uk
- 2 From June this year, all direct marketing calls to businesses must comply with the new legal regulations. For further information, visit <http://corporate.mpsonline.org.uk/CTPSC/html/default.asp>
- 3 The Distance Selling Regulations 2000 were put in place to give consumers a certain level of protection when they are shopping for goods or services at a distance. See the article *A firm grip* in the July/August 2004 issue of *Sales and Marketing Professional* for more information. ■

a checklist for success...

DO...

Make sure you do your homework first about the companies you are going to call to ensure they fit your target profile

Have a valid business reason or valid listening reason and this will make you feel more confident about calling them in the first place

Always start the conversation about 'them and their business' – not you and your product or service

Make friends with PAs to help you gain access to the decision-makers

Record your calls and monitor your success. Build a process of continuous improvement

DON'T...

Keep calling people if they will not engage with you – for example, if they are 'always in a meeting'. Find new prospects!

Sound 'scripted'. Try to have a *conversation* with the other person even if they are just taking a message for you

Hang up when answer machines or voicemail kicks in. Leave a message which keeps you in the prospect's mind's eye

Stay in 'your world' – pushing your company and your product. Try to relate to the other person and his business and be aware of how he might be feeling at that point in time

Keep calling if you are feeling low and getting poor results. Change your 'state': speak to a colleague, have a large glass of water, take ten deep breaths and move around. This should help raise your spirits



the author

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