

*“Power Phone Scripts is the perfect sales preSCRIPTION.”*

— Jeffrey Gitomer, author of *The Sales Bible* and *The Little Red Book of Selling*



# POWER PHONE SCRIPTS

**500 WORD-FOR-WORD QUESTIONS, PHRASES, AND  
CONVERSATIONS TO OPEN AND CLOSE MORE SALES**

**MIKE BROOKS**

WILEY

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## CHAPTER 2

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# ***Better, Smarter Prospecting Techniques New Cold Calling Techniques That Work***

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**L**earning how to effectively pick up the phone and make an effective cold (or prospecting) call is *the* most important sales skill you can learn. Every other part of the sale follows this essential skill. If you are not closing sales the way you want to be, then it can invariably be traced back to a poor job of qualifying a lead during the prospecting phase of the sale. If you put in the time to learn and perfect the art of cold calling, your results can quickly change. Once you get good at prospecting, you grow in confidence, your sales improve dramatically, and you truly put your career and future in your own hands. No other skill is more important than learning how to effectively call a prospect, build rapport, and then know how to deal with and bypass their initial resistance. No skill is more important than knowing how to truly qualify a sales prospect.

I say this is the most important skill, yet I know some of you will want to argue that closing is the most important skill. This is not true. “You can’t close an unqualified lead” is the most important tenet in sales. Unfortunately, that’s what entire sales teams are attempting to do every day: close leads that are not qualified and therefore will never close. Managers spend much of their day monitoring and measuring what goes into the sales funnel, and new software is developed (and purchased) to measure the top of the funnel, the middle, and the bottom. Metrics are carefully collected and analyzed in an attempt to diagnose and fix the “sales problem” as it relates to the sales funnel, yet no one is

looking at or attempting to fix the most important part: what goes *into* the funnel to begin with!

There is an old adage that I'm sure you have heard before: "Garbage in, garbage out." This is the most accurate way to describe most companies'—and sales reps'—pipelines. The average rate of closed sales from supposedly qualified leads—leads that a sales rep has prospected for, put into his or her pipeline, and given presentations to—is two out of 10. That means that *just two leads* turn into deals, while the other eight are abandoned. Think about the time, energy, and resources that go into those eight failed sales! This is why companies need to look at the real problem instead of investing in ways to measure, calculate, and endlessly discuss these abominable results.

The real problem is that companies, sales managers, and trainers (if the company is lucky enough to have a trainer) often don't know how to properly teach the fundamental sales skills to begin with. This is especially true with cold calling and qualifying. The essential skills that you'll find in this book seem to be a lost art. I am hired by companies all the time—very successful ones, too—and when I do my discovery, drill down to their sales process, and look at the actual techniques and scripts they give their sales reps to use while cold calling and qualifying, they are abysmal. Very few companies give their sales teams actual scripted approaches, strategies, and tools to handle the selling situations they run into day after day. Most sales teams are ill prepared to handle the resistance they constantly get, and fewer still have any real criteria as to what constitutes a "qualified lead" to begin with. Given this dearth of techniques, skills, and guidance, it's no wonder that sales teams fail, morale is low, and turnover is so high. The only thing it does explain is why the conversion rate is so low—again, about 20 percent across industries.

So what is the solution? The solution is to recognize what I said at the beginning of this book: the best thing about sales is that 80 percent of the selling situations, resistance, stalls, and objections a sales rep and team get are the same day in and day out. In other words, sales are repeatable processes with recurring objections and stalls. The solution for improvement of sales results is the same for an individual sales rep as with the entire sales team: you need to learn, adapt, internalize, and use



proven and effective sales skills, techniques, and scripts to effectively and confidently deal with these recurring sales situations. In other words, selling is a predictable process, and by carefully preparing for it, you and your team can successfully predict (and improve) your results.

What I do for all my clients is first identify the best-practice sales process for their product or service, then create a comprehensive script playbook that follows this best-practice approach. Many of those exact scripts and techniques are what you're going to find in this book. Once you create this best-practice approach to handling your specific sale, that's when you go from ad-libbing (the "spray and pray" approach to pitching), to becoming a prepared professional who knows exactly how to create a qualified prospect and then lead that prospect through to a closed sale. Once you learn to do that, you greatly increase your lead-to-close ratio, and your team begins closing closer to five out of 10 leads. Your top reps will get closer to five out of eight sales per lead ratio. That's when you'll know you have created not only a successful sales process, but one that you can scale as well.

It all starts here, at the beginning. It all starts with your very first call: the prospecting call. Learning how to handle the key, repeatable situations here will form the groundwork for everything else you will do. Learning how to confidently handle blow-offs that frustrate the other 80 percent of sales reps who are winging it, and learning how to truly develop rapport by actively engaging prospects, and then learning how to professionally qualify them so you know exactly what their buying motives are, what their true timeline is, and why they will or will not choose you—these are the real parts that should be measured in a sales pipeline. Once you do, the other numbers so many managers focus on now—the top, middle, and end of the funnel—will sort themselves out. Because finally, true closing ratios will change for the better.

What you will find in the paragraphs that follow are fresh approaches to cold calling and qualifying techniques that are being used effectively today by some of the best sales teams in the world. Many of these are advanced techniques, and in this book I have not gone over the same ground I covered in my first book of scripts, *The Ultimate Book of Phone Scripts*. That book, too, is packed with essential and proven techniques that will help you deal with the gatekeeper

and overcome initial resistance and objections. I highly recommend you invest time and energy incorporating those proven scripts as well. Together, these two books of phone scripts and techniques will give you and your team every script, strategy, and skill you will need to successfully navigate any sales process.

Now, don't worry—you will find a plethora of proven and effective scripts in this book to help you prospect, qualify, and effectively deal with the objections you get now while calling. These scripts are proven effective, and they are the same ones I use in both my business and my training. Your goal as a sales rep or sales leader is to read these scripts and then take the time to adapt them to your product or service and to your personality. It is crucial that you customize these scripts by tweaking them so they feel natural to you. Once you do, it's time to record them into a recording device (most smart phones have a recording feature) and listen to them 30 to 40 times. That way, you will memorize and internalize them. After you use them 50 times or more, they will become a habit for you and the way you just automatically respond to the selling situations and objections you get over and over.

Once you do that, sales will become easy for you. Once you don't have to think about how to respond to a prospect, that's when success becomes automatic for you. Suddenly you will find that you can actually listen to your prospects and hear not only what they are saying, but also what they really mean. That is when you've entered the Top 20 Percent of the sales producers in the world. From there, you only get better and better, faster and faster. Once you put in the time to learn the scripts and techniques in this book, your sales career, your life, and your company will never be the same. It's exciting, and I'm excited for you. So, if you are ready, keep an open mind as you read the following scripts and techniques, and constantly ask yourself: How does this technique or script apply to what *I* am selling? How can I customize it so it is effective for me?

If you keep yourself focused on the similarities rather than the differences (a good philosophy, by the way, for all of life), you will keep yourself focused on improving and getting better. It all starts with the following solid scripts and techniques you will read here.

## A FRESH PROSPECTING APPROACH FOR YOU

Like you, I get calls every week from inside sales reps trying to sell me their products and services. I used to just hang up on them, noting that I wasn't missing much, as most inside sales reps are just not that good at engaging, listening, building rapport, and so on. Lately, however, I have been listening more and realizing that I can learn just as much from a bad call as I can from a good one. I recently received a qualifying call from an appointment setter, and it turned out to be a fresh approach I'd not heard before. I picked up a couple of good ideas, and if this approach can be adapted to your sale, I would highly recommend you try it.

Here's what happened: the call I received was from a company selling some sort of oil and gas drilling private placement investment. For those of you unfamiliar with these, this is the kind of investment that a private company can sell directly to an individual investor. In other words, the company usually (and I use "usually" very loosely—check with your individual state governing body) doesn't have to register with the Securities and Exchange Commission, and so can "usually" avoid a ton of administrative and regulatory red tape.

The big "but" here is that this type of investment vehicle can generally only be offered to, and sold to, what is known as an "accredited" investor, meaning someone who has at least a \$1 million net worth and income in excess of \$200,000. (Again, if you deal in these kinds of investments, check with your state regulatory agency for the specific guidelines for your state and the states you are calling.)

The company that contacted me used a "qualifier" whose job it is to call and qualify people as an accredited investor before any sales rep speaks with them. Using a qualifier to simply identify potential prospects was a good idea, as it no doubt saved the sales reps a lot of time and effort. This is good, and one I'd not heard before. Here is how the call went:

Caller: "Hi, my name is Sonya, and I'm calling with the ABC Oil and Gas Company here in Dallas, Texas. Am I speaking with Mike Brooks?"

Me: "Ah, yes. . . ."

Caller: “Mike, this is not a sales call at all. I only have two quick questions for you, and then I’ll go, okay?”

Me: “Sure, go ahead.”

Caller: “We have in our records that you are an accredited investor with a net worth of at least one million dollars, right?”

Me: “Sure.”

Caller: “And is your income still at least \$200,000 or over?”

Me: “Sure.”

Caller: “Okay, great. One of our representatives will be in touch with you in the next few days. Thanks for your time, and have a good day.”

And that was it. She was gone almost as quickly as she appeared. In the span of just a couple of minutes, she had qualified me enough to pass me on (as a lead) to one of the closers. Very interesting. Let’s break down why this was so effective:

1. She made sure she was speaking to the decision maker before she continued: “Am I speaking to Mike Brooks?”
2. She sensed my hesitancy and immediately had a reply for it: “Mike, this is not a sales call at all. . . .”
3. Next, she earned the right to ask just two questions because she then said she would be off the phone: “I have only two quick questions for you, and then I’ll go, okay?”
4. Then she qualified me for the two most important criteria for her sale—net worth and income.
5. The ending was interesting. She told me that someone else would be following up in a few days, and before I could object, she hung up.

I am not saying I love this call or hate it. I am just impressed by how efficient it was in qualifying, and how quickly she could generate a lead and then pass it on. Obviously, these two qualifiers are crucial to know before one of their sales reps gets involved, and this turned out to be an effective way to do it.

Now, how could you use this technique in your sale? First, if you work with appointment setters, lead gen reps, or qualifiers, then pick

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out the two most important qualifications and use the preceding script to create your pitch for your initial callers. Here are three examples.

If you are selling lead or marketing services, it could be:

1. “Do you handle the lead generation for marketing?”
2. “If you plan to compare services or companies in the next quarter, would you be open to reviewing material from another company?”

If you are selling online advertising, it could be:

1. “How much do you get involved in the online advertising decisions?”
2. “Are you open to at least knowing about options to improve your current results while perhaps also saving money?”

If you are selling real estate, it could be:

1. “Are you the homeowner?”
2. “Do you have any plans to consider selling your home in the next 12 months?”

You get the idea. Almost any product or service has a couple of key questions that a qualifier can ask to prequalify a lead. The best part of this script is that it takes under a minute! You are on and then off with a prospect very quickly, and, as I found, the prospect is left somewhat expecting the next call, whether they want it or not. For the next two weeks, every time the phone rang, I half expected it to be the oil and gas rep! So, what are the two most important qualifiers for your sale, and how can you get your lead gen people to ask them quickly and efficiently?

## **A BETTER APPROACH THAN “HOW ARE YOU TODAY?”**

Nothing signals a sales call more than that worn-out opening, “How are you today?” As soon as you ask that of someone you’ve not spoken

to before, their immediate thought is, “Oh, here comes a sales pitch from someone I don’t want to talk to!”

If you don’t believe me, think about your own reaction when someone you don’t know calls you at home or the office and asks you that? I cringe just thinking about it, and so do your prospects. Wouldn’t you like to know a better opening? Wouldn’t you like to find something that doesn’t sound sales-y, yet still breaks the ice and gets your prospect to respond positively?

Well, I have it for you.

I learned this opening working with a new client recently, and while at first I was suspicious of whether it would work or not, after listening to recordings, I found that it worked really well. So well, in fact, that I now teach it to other clients, and it works great for them as well.

As you’ll see, it is assumptive in nature (always a good thing); it gets your prospect to agree with you, and it puts you in control, allowing you to continue your opening. Use it word for word for a week, and I think you will agree:

“Hi \_\_\_\_\_, this is \_\_\_\_\_ with [your company]. I trust you are doing well today?”

If you would like to vary it a little, you can also say:

“Hi \_\_\_\_\_, this is \_\_\_\_\_ with [your company]. I take it you’re doing well today?”

*or*

“Hi \_\_\_\_\_, this is \_\_\_\_\_ with [your company]. I hope your day is going well so far?”

As you can see, this opening invariably leads to a yes, and even a response of, “Yes, and I hope yours is, too.”

The big difference here is that you are finally going to stop sounding like every other sales rep out there, and you are going to stop telegraphing that your call is another sales call.

As with all these scripts, don't take my word for it—try it yourself and see how it works for you. I am sure, with a little practice, you will love how effective it is.

## **DON'T SAY THAT, SAY THIS!**

I always say that sales is set of repeatable skills that anyone can learn. If you commit to learning and practicing the right skills, then things will be easier for you and you will have more success, but if you don't learn and use the right skills, then you will tend to wing it and make things up as you go along. This strategy is proven to lead to more frustration and fewer sales. It's sad but true: most sales reps use ineffective skills and techniques that make it harder for them to succeed. Until you change what you do, you will just keep getting those poor results.

Following are five examples of poor techniques. I call them “Don't say that,” followed by what to say instead. Look at these and ask yourself how many of these you are using and then make a commitment to begin using the more effective statements instead. Give these a test for a while and see for yourself how much easier selling over the phone becomes.

*While prospecting, don't say:*

“I wonder if I caught you at a good time?”

*Or*

“Is this a good time for you?”

While it sounds polite to ask permission before you begin a conversation, giving your prospect a chance to avoid speaking to a salesperson (you) is almost always a bad idea. If I am ever given that option, I always say it's a bad time just to get you off the phone. There is a better way to acknowledge that you are barging into someone's day unannounced.

*Say this instead:*

“I know you're busy, so let me briefly ask you just one thing: we provide (your product) to other companies or clients, and it may help you, too. I have a quick question: How do you currently...”

*Or*

“When was the last time you compared. . . .”

*Or*

“Are you the right person to speak with regarding this?”

This technique works on several levels: first, you are acknowledging that they are busy and letting them know in advance that you are going to be brief. Second, the opening is short, and you immediately engage your prospect by asking a qualifying question. By getting to a question quickly, you are giving your prospect the opportunity to tell you if he or she is busy or not. And don't worry, if they don't have the time, they will tell you. This is much better than offering them the easy out in the beginning. Third, by asking a qualifying question (and feel free to customize what you want to ask), you are learning something about your prospect. Overall, this is the much more effective opening, and I encourage you to give it a fair trial.

*While prospecting, don't say:*

“I'm calling to learn a little bit more about your company. . . .”

Quick: What is the one thing you and your prospects don't have enough of? Time. One of the biggest causes of resistance from your prospects is the idea of a sales rep taking some of their precious time to pitch them on something they probably don't want anyway. I groan when a sales rep calls me and starts pitching. When you are at home and a telemarketer calls you, how do *you* feel?

While opening your call by asking, “I'm calling to learn a little bit more about your company,” might sound consultative and in your prospect's best interest, it isn't perceived that way. It is instead like saying, “I'm a sales rep who wants to take your valuable time and interrogate you so I can learn whether I can sell you something.” Not very appealing, is it? That's why it's much better to say this instead:

“\_\_\_\_\_, briefly, we help companies do (training, software, and so on), and I just have a quick question to easily find out if this is a fit for you as well.

“How do you currently. . . .”



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*Or*

“When was the last time you. . . .”

*Or*

“Are you the right person to speak with regarding this?”

Once again, the key is to be brief and to get to a qualifying question quickly. Your prospect will appreciate that you’re getting to the point right away, and this immediately separates you from all the other sales reps calling to steal their time.

*While prospecting, don’t open your call like this:*

“The reason for my call is that we provide accounting solutions for companies that process more than 150 employees in a month. Our solution is ideal for companies like yours in that we can save you both time and money handling. . . .”

Believe it or not, most sales reps start a call with a product dump monologue that instantly puts prospects in a bad mood. Nobody cares what you do or how you do it. Instead, what they want to know is if it is a fit for them and how it can help them. That is why you must—absolutely must—get to the point quickly and ask them a question so they can *engage with you*.

*Do open your call this way instead:*

“The reason I’m calling is to see if you’d be a good candidate for what we do. . . . In a nutshell, we have a super-easy solution that saves companies as much as 15 percent monthly in the way they process their employee checks. Let me ask you just two quick questions:

One: Who are you using now to process employee payments?

Two: If we could also save you 15 percent off your monthly expenses, how open would you be to seeing if this would be a fit for you?”

This opening is much better for several reasons. First, it is short (always a good thing on a prospecting call). Next, it lets them know

you are simply calling to see if they would be a fit (which is what they want to know as well before they're willing to invest more time to speak with you). It also tells them your solution is "super easy" (and who doesn't like that?). Then it gives them a benefit (the 15 percent). Lastly, you are immediately giving them an opportunity to interact by asking a question and letting them talk.

*While prospecting, don't say:*

"Are you the person who would be making a decision on something like this?"

The biggest problem with this approach is that it is closed-ended. It requires a yes or no answer, and that allows the prospect to hide behind a smokescreen answer. It is much easier for them to say yes and avoid getting into the real decision tree that you will unfortunately find out later. (Like when you ask for the sale and they tell you they should run this by their boss, manager, spouse, and so on.)

*Say this instead:*

"Besides yourself, who else weighs in on a decision like this?"

Ah, the power of open-ended, assumptive questions. This question immediately cuts through any smokescreen your prospect would otherwise use, and it automatically gets them to reveal who else is involved. Most people will consult with someone (or multiple people) when making a decision. Don't you? Isn't it better to find out in advance who those people are?

*While closing, don't respond to the objection:*

"I'll run this by my regional manager (or boss or partner, and so forth) and see what he or she says."

With:

"When should I get back to you?"

So much time and energy can be saved if you prepare yourself for this common stall in advance by learning how to answer it correctly.

The last thing you want to do is hand control of the close over to your prospect by asking when you should get back to them.

*While closing, do respond to this objection this way:*

“Terrific, and if he gives you the okay to move on this, what other questions do you have for me?”

*Or*

“Okay, and let me ask you: Based on what you’ve seen so far, is this something that you’d be inclined to move forward with if the decision were up to you?”

(If yes)

“And how much influence do you have with your regional manager in deciding on something like this?”

I can’t emphasize enough that one of the biggest keys to success in sales is to realize that 80 percent of the objections you get are the same ones you got yesterday and that you will get again tomorrow. In other words, most of the selling situations, objections, and stalls you get remain the same! Once you acknowledge this, you can leverage this by taking the time to prepare in advance with the right responses to the stalls and objections you get all the time. The preceding response allows you to isolate the stall at the end of your close and get right to the real objection. In other words, if the prospect isn’t sold, then speaking to someone else is just a smokescreen that won’t go away when you call them back. Finding out now gives you the ability to deal with the real objection, and it is best to do so while you have them on the phone and you are in the closing arena.

As you can see by these techniques, sales is a series of definable and repeatable skills that anyone can learn. The key, however, is to make a commitment to learning and then consistently applying the right skills until they become your automatic habit. Remember, practice doesn’t make perfect; *it only makes permanent*. If you use poor skills over and over, you are not going to improve. Conversely, making small adjustments in the techniques you use can have a *big* impact on your results.

But do not take my word for it. As always, try these scripts for yourself and see how much better a reaction you get, and how much more easily your cold calling and closing presentations go.

## HOW TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE ELEVATOR PITCH

Many inside sales reps (outside reps, too!) struggle when trying to describe their company, products, and services in a succinct and compelling way that engages a prospect and makes them want to hear more. Instead, a typical opening delivered to an unsuspecting prospect usually sounds more like a monologue meant to repel interest and generate the impulse to get off the phone as soon as possible. I am sure you have been accosted in this way with something like:

“Oh hi, this is \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ and my company, XYZ, is a leader in national and international shipping and freight services with offices in the top metropolitan cities across the world. We offer one of the lowest overall freight charges on transportation, and also on packaging and supplies. We are going to have a representative in your city next week, and we’d love to stop by to share some information with you and learn more about your business to see how we can help save you money and time as well. Would you be available next Wednesday at 2 P.M., or would Thursday at 4 P.M. be better?”

And companies and sales reps wonder why they are not successful. Rather than break down what is wrong with this opening (how about everything?), what I am going to do instead is give you two rules for developing an effective elevator pitch and then some examples that you can plug your product or service into.

Here are the two rules:

1. Make it brief—one sentence is best, two short ones if necessary.
2. Focus it on the direct benefits to your specific type of customer.

Remember, this is an “elevator pitch” designed to inform and grab interest in a prospect during the time you are in an elevator together. Try working with the following examples.

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#### Elevator pitch example 1:

“\_\_\_\_\_, we work with small business owners helping them save on average 20 percent of their shipping costs while also increasing their efficiency and tracking. To see how we can help you, I’d like to schedule a brief 10-minute meeting next week...”

#### Elevator pitch example 2:

“\_\_\_\_\_, we help inside sales teams achieve as much as 33 percent more monthly revenue by providing them with a best-practice approach that helps them cold-call more effectively and close more qualified prospects. This means an immediate bump in production and profits, often within the first 30 days.”

#### Elevator pitch example 3:

“\_\_\_\_\_ the ABC Company gives homeowners complete peace of mind by eliminating routine maintenance costs and insuring against unexpected expenses. I’ve got just two questions to see which of our plans might work for you...”

#### Elevator pitch example 4:

“\_\_\_\_\_, our motto is: “A guaranteed comfortable night’s sleep, or your money back.” Now, have you ever tried our luxury brand of mattress before?”

#### Elevator pitch example 5:

“\_\_\_\_\_, at (training, software, and so on) advertising, our small business clients get the most comprehensive online exposure, the certified highest traffic, and the most qualified leads in the industry—all at the guaranteed lowest rates. Where are you currently advertising online now?”

As you can see by these elevator pitches, not only are they short and focused on the benefits to a specific customer (“small business owner” or “homeowner”), they often end with a qualifying question like “Have you ever tried...?” or “Where are you currently advertising online now?”

By ending with a qualifying question, you are not only engaging your prospect, but you are also learning about their buying motives and

uncovering their level of interest. Take some time now to develop your own concise and compelling elevator pitch, and then replace your monologue with a more effective opening. Your customers (and your bank account) will thank you for it.

## FOUR WAYS TO GET PAST THE GATEKEEPER

Getting screened out by the receptionist or gatekeeper is still one of the biggest causes of phone aversion. Questions like, “Will he know who’s calling?” or “Will he know what this call is about,” or “Has she spoken to you before?” are enough to keep any inside sales rep up at night, and the sad thing is it doesn’t have to be this way! If you follow the basic philosophy provided here and then adapt and use any of the scripts provided, you can instantly increase your transfer rate to the decision maker.

The basic philosophy on getting gatekeepers to put you through is this: stop trying to hide. Don’t try to trick or fool the gatekeeper into thinking that you already know or have spoken to the prospect before. Also, stop inviting the gatekeeper to interrogate you by giving them incomplete information like just your first name, or by not giving them your company name in the beginning. And most of all, *stop pitching the gatekeeper*. It also helps to remember what the gatekeeper’s role is.

A gatekeeper’s role is to find out the name and company name of the person calling so they can let the decision maker (DM) know who is on the line. In most cases, that’s it. In reality (and most of the time), they don’t need to know if you have a relationship with the DM or not, or what you are selling, and so on. If you volunteer this information in the beginning (rather than making them drag it out of you) and you do it in a polite and assumptive way, you will get put through to the decision maker without any additional screening. Use the following proven techniques to fly by the receptionist or gatekeeper and be connected directly with the decision maker most of the time.

*Technique 1:* Please, please, please. I have written about this technique before, but it remains the most effective and easiest one to use to increase your chances of being put through up to 65 to 75 percent

of the time. (I still use this every single day, and it *works!*) Here is how it goes:

Receptionist: “Thanks for calling the ABC Company. How can I help you?”

You: “Hi, this is \_\_\_\_\_ with [your company name], may I please speak with \_\_\_\_\_, please?”

That’s it. Simple, easy, and very effective. The key is to say this with a warm smile in your voice, and make sure you use “please” twice along with the instructional statement: “May I please speak with . . .” The other key is that you give your full name and your full company name as well (even if it doesn’t mean anything to them).

*Technique 2:* If you don’t know the name of the contact you need to speak with, then use the “I need a little help, please,” technique. It is very effective if you do it the way I describe here.

Receptionist: “Thanks for calling the ABC Company. How can I help you?”

You: “Hi \_\_\_\_\_, this is \_\_\_\_\_ with [your company name]. I need a little bit of help, please.” [It is crucial that you *wait* here for the person to ask how they can help you before you ask for the person or department.]

Receptionist: “How can I help you?”

You: “I need to speak with the best person who handles (your product or service). Who would that be, please?”

Over 50 percent of the time, if you have asked this nicely enough and waited for a response, the receptionist will route you to the right department. When you get there, simply use the previous opening again, and you will be consistently connected with the right contact.

The key here is to: be polite and put a smile in your voice; say “please,” and make sure to *wait* for the person to respond before you ask for the right person. This will work if you follow the preceding three steps.

*Technique 3:* If you don’t know the name of the contact, an alternative is to ask to be put through to a department instead, and then use

the preceding technique. This is a great way to completely bypass the gatekeeper and avoid any chance of screening.

Receptionist: “Thanks for calling the ABC Company. How can I help you?”

You: “Hi, could you please connect me with the marketing department, please?”

Again, be assumptive and use that powerful word, “please.”

Once you get there, use the “I need a little bit of help, please” technique.

*Technique 4:* If you get screened further, you absolutely *must* know exactly how to respond. Use any of the following techniques:

If the receptionist asks: “Is he expecting your call?”

You answer: “I don’t have an appointment this time, but could you please tell him that \_\_\_\_\_ is holding, please?”

If the receptionist asks: “Will he know what this call is about?”

You answer: “Not specifically, but please tell him it’s about [his lead tracking], and I’ll be happy to hold on, please.”

You can also substitute “not specifically” with any of the following: “not yet. . . .” or “not sure,” and so on.

A key point here is that you resist the urge to *pitch the receptionist*. So many inside sales reps think that if they only tell the gatekeeper how great their product or service is, then they will want to put you through. This is a *big* mistake! First, remember that the gatekeeper doesn’t care what you are selling—they just need your name and company name so they have something to give the decision maker (in most cases). Second, as soon as you launch into a sales pitch, you immediately identify yourself as a sales rep, and this raises a red flag for them. Instead, use “please” and always end with an instructional statement asking to be put through (please!).

If the receptionist asks: “Have you spoken to him before?”

You answer: “Not about [his lead tracking], but could you please let him know that \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_ is holding, please?”



Do not mistake how simple these techniques seem—they are powerful, and they work *if* you deliver them warmly and exactly as stated. Remember, a gatekeeper’s main goal isn’t to screen you out, but rather to pass on accurate information on who is calling, and from what company, and sometimes what the call is regarding. Will you run into some gatekeepers who are harder to get through? Of course. Will these techniques work all the time? Of course not, but if you use them consistently, you’ll find that they will work with about 70 percent of the companies you call. I bet that is a higher percentage than your current techniques are producing, isn’t it?

## **WHY ASKING FOR HELP IS A GREAT WAY TO GET INFORMATION**

Before you discount the technique of politely asking for help, just remember that everyone loves to be helpful. I am sure you feel better when you hold the door open for someone at the supermarket or if you let someone pull into traffic in front of you. By recognizing this, you will have a greater opportunity to get through to the right department or contact if you enlist the help of the gatekeeper or receptionist first.

Here are some expanded examples of how asking for help at the right time can do more than just get you through to the right person or department. If you play it right, you can also get a treasure trove of useful information you can use to position your product or service later on.

As stated in the preceding section, if you don’t know the person or department you need to speak with, there is no better opening than:

“Hi, I need a little bit of help, please. . . .”

Once again, the crucial thing here is not to ask a question. (It is amazing how many people just can’t resist asking one right away! If this describes you, then hit your mute button *right after* you ask for help.) As soon as they say, “What do you need?” or “I can help you,” that’s when you reply with something like:

“Thanks. I’m looking for the person who handles [your lead generation]. Who would that be, please?”

If they don't know the name, then be prepared with:

"Perhaps you could point me to the right department then?"

Asking for help in this way is also useful when you ask for someone and he or she is no longer there. It is also great for when you do reach someone and he or she turns out to be the wrong contact. When that happens, use:

"Oh, I see. Perhaps you can help me then. Who would be the best person to speak with regarding \_\_\_\_\_?"

*Or*

"I see. Can you point me in the right direction then, please?"

*Or*

"Okay, perhaps you can help me. Who would be the right person for me to speak with about ordering your (training, software, and so on) supplies?"

These techniques are great for finding the right person or department to speak with, but the power of this technique goes far beyond that. Use the following types of "help" questions once you do reach the appropriate prospect:

"I'm glad I got in touch with you. Perhaps you can help me understand how you handle your (training, software, and so on) process. How do you get involved in that?"

*Or*

"I'm glad I got in touch with you. Perhaps you can help me. How does the ordering of the (training, software, and so on) process go?"

*And*

"\_\_\_\_\_, we have a lot of solutions that may be a fit, but I don't want to bombard you. Perhaps you can help give me a brief understanding of who handles what, and then I'll be able to know who would be the best person for this. Let's start with you—what do you take care of there?"

*And*

"\_\_\_\_\_, could you help me understand how this flows at your company? Who handles (training, software, and so on)?"

*And*

“\_\_\_\_\_, help me understand how the decision process works over there. How do you get involved?”

*And*

“Perhaps you can help me. I’m sure you’ve got a lot of people handling different things. Let’s start with the part of the process you handle. What part is that?”

Layer with:

“And who handles the other parts?”

As you can see, there are a lot of applications for the “I need a little bit of help, please” technique. Now, a word of caution: don’t underestimate how powerful this is. While it seems simple, it is actually a very powerful technique if you use it appropriately.

One more tip: when asking for help, genuinely mean it. Use your voice inflection and timing. Remember to always wait for the other person to offer to help you! If you master this technique, you will find that you won’t have to work so hard to find things out. Because they sincerely want to help, people will help you—if you ask correctly.

## **STOP PITCHING THE GATEKEEPER—AND WHAT TO DO INSTEAD**

One of the biggest mistakes many inside sales reps make is pitching the gatekeeper. For some reason, they feel compelled to pour their pitch on the first pair of ears they get, and, unfortunately, this usually gets them into trouble.

To start with, the gatekeeper is just that—someone whose job it is to screen salespeople from getting through to the decision maker. The worst thing you can do is immediately identify yourself as a salesperson by pitching them in the hope that they will be so moved by your pitch that they will want to put you through right away. Doesn’t happen. Instead, all you do is trigger their automatic response of, “Just email something, and I’ll forward it to my boss.” Or worse.

Also, the reason you don't want to pitch the gatekeeper is because they don't care what you are selling and they usually have zero say in whether to buy from you or not. Again, they are gatekeepers—not decision makers. Pitching them will mean nothing, and all it will do is annoy them and waste your time.

So, what to do? Your job, believe it or not, is to get past the gatekeeper with as little interrogation as possible and connect with the decision maker. That is the person you want to give your brief pitch to. So here are a couple of ways to avoid pitching the gatekeeper, and instead, getting to the decision maker.

1. By now, you know all about the “Please, please, please” technique. Some of you are already using it, and isn't it great? For those of you who aren't yet—what's wrong with you? It is amazingly effective! You can avoid 65 percent (or more) of any screening by simply opening your call with:

“Hi, this is [your name] with [your company], could you please connect me with [DM's name], please?”

That's it. To learn more about this technique, visit my blog here: <http://mrinsidesales.com/insidesalestrainingblog>

2. If you do not know the name of the person you are looking for, simply say:

“Hi, this is [your name] with [your company] and I need a little bit of help, please.”

After they ask how they can help you, you say,

“I'm looking for the person who handles (training, software, and so on). Who would that be, please?”

That is it. No pitching and no pleading to be put through. Instead, you are simply asking for their help and then directing them to put you through. If you ask this in a polite way, you will get through most of the time.

Now here comes the tricky part: in some cases, the gatekeeper has a little more authority, like an office manager or executive assistant. In these cases, it is okay to deliver your opening value statement briefly—just so they know what it is about—but then it is highly important to try to get through to the decision maker as soon as possible. Here are a few ways to do that.

The best way is to quickly qualify for decision-maker status. As soon as you ask if he or she makes the decision on what you are selling and are told that someone else makes the decision, that is your cue to ask to be put through to the actual DM. By the way, never say, “decision maker.” Rather, use the contact’s name. Try:

“Oh, I see. I’ll tell you what: if you would put me through to [DM—contact’s name] briefly, I’ll explain what this is about, and if he (or she) is interested in learning more, I can make an appointment that fits his/her schedule. I will be happy to hold on while you connect me.”

*Or*

“It sounds like the best thing to do before I send something is to have just a few words with [DM], and that way I can save us both a lot of time depending on their level of interest. Could you please let [DM] know that I’m holding, please?”

*Or*

“Before I bother you with emails and then follow-up calls, why don’t you put me in touch with [the boss/DM] briefly, and I will see if there is an interest on his/her side. If so, I will take the appropriate action. If not, we will save us all a lot of time. Could you let [the DM] know I’m holding, please?”

Sometimes the gatekeeper or office manager will want a little more information on what it is you are offering, and in this case, it is okay to give them more details, but just make sure that you qualify for their role in the decision process, and that you ask for the best way to connect with the other decision makers, if possible. Sample questions include: “And besides yourself, who makes the decision on this?”

Layer with:

“Great, may I connect briefly with them to make sure this is something they would like to know more about?”

*Or*

“If this is something you like, how much influence do you have in the decision process?”

If they tell you their boss would make the final decision, then, Layer with:

“I understand completely. I’ll tell you what, so we don’t waste your time or his/hers. Let me have a brief word with him/her, and I will see if this is something he/she even wants to learn more about. I’ll be happy to hold on.”

If you are then told they aren’t available, try to get their name or direct email address or extension, and when you call back, ask for the DM directly.

The major lesson here is that you must resist the temptation to pitch the gatekeeper, or to give too much of your pitch to the assistant if he or she is not the final DM. Give just enough to qualify for interest, and then try to get through to the actual DM. This will save you a lot of time and headache later.

## **WHAT TO DO IF THE PROSPECT TAKES ONLY EMAILS**

I received an email from a reader who said that he sometimes gets the objection from the gatekeeper of, “I am sorry, but he/she does not take outside calls. He/she responds only to emails.” He asked if there is a way to get around this, and my answer is, “Sometimes.” Let’s start at the beginning.

First, my question to the sales rep who sent me this email would be, “How did the gatekeeper know you were an ‘outside’ call rather than a client, prospect, or someone with a preexisting relationship?” The first thing a sales rep needs to do when prospecting is to use the “please, please, please” technique that I have written about earlier and

to be as assumptive, yet polite, as possible. This generally eliminates 60 to 80 percent of the screening you are likely to get.

If you still get the screening of “What’s this call in regard to?,” once again, you need to use the assumptive, direct approach combined with a second “please” at the end. Something like, “Yes, please tell her it’s about her [lead processing], and I’ll be happy to hold, please.” This will work in most instances. Once again, you must use the openings as I recommend them to avoid most screening to begin with.

If you have used both openings and still get the objection, “She responds only to email,” then you can try the following statements, which may sometimes work.

Prospect takes only email—Response 1:

“I *have* emailed in the past, and I think they may be getting stuck in her spam folder. Could you please tell her I need just a minute to confirm this, please?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 2:

“I’d love to email her my information, but I’m not sure which brochure to send. Would you mind if I had just a two-minute conversation to see what would be appropriate, please? I’ll be happy to hold.”

Prospect takes only email—Response 3:

“And how do I reach her if I don’t hear back from my email?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 4:

“I understand, but this is important. May I speak with her supervisor/assistant, please?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 5:

“I understand she may be busy. Who is her manager, please?”

Then:

“Could you please connect me with \_\_\_\_\_, please?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 6:

“I know what that’s like. We have a similar policy here as well, but after three email attempts, the caller is to be put through. Could you tell her I’m holding, please?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 7:

“Question for you: If I haven’t heard back from my previous emails, how would *you* recommend I reach her?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 8:

“If I end up not being able to reach her, who *can* you connect me to?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 9:

“My email is down right now. Would you mind putting me through for a quick question?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 10:

“Could I please speak to *your* supervisor, please?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 11:

“What happened the last time you put someone through to her?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 12:

“I’m not allowed to email anyone I don’t already have in my database. Would you mind letting her know I’m holding, please?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 13:

“Who *can* you put me through to?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 14:

“Could I have customer service, please?”



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(Then just go through them to be put through to your prospect.)

Prospect takes only email—Response 15:

“What would you recommend is the best way to reach her by phone?”

Prospect takes only email—Response 16:

“No problem. For the next time, what is her extension, please?”

These are a variety of responses you can use to get past the gatekeeper and on to your decision maker. Pick the ones that work best for your sale and your personality. If you find that you absolutely cannot get through, try reaching out to your prospect through LinkedIn or other social media.

If you exhaust all of these options and still find you can't get through to a prospect, then consider them disqualified for your product or service and move on. There are plenty of other prospects/deals awaiting your call.

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