

CORPORATED MANAGEMENT / HUMAN RESOURCES

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Getting straight to the [point]

When you telephone a prospect, be prepared with a script that helps you meet your call objective

THERE are usually three purposes for calling potential customers.

You want to:

- Inform them about something;
- Remind them about an event or a meeting; and
- Persuade them to take action.

Once you are clear about your call objective, it becomes easier for you to create the script you are going to use when you are on the telephone.

Your telephone script has six different sections:

1 Introducing yourself

Keep the first section simple. For example, I would say: "Good morning, it's Tom Abbott calling from Soho Sales Coaching. How are you, do you have a minute?"

The question I really want the person to answer is: "Do you have a minute?" Or, "Is this a good time to speak?" This approach allows you to control the call.

There are only

two possible answers to those questions. "Yes, this is a good time" gives you permission to continue with a script. "No, this is not a good time" gives you permission to try to ask the person when would be a suitable time.

2 Building rapport

If you have met the person you are calling before, this is a great opportunity to say: "It was really nice meeting you at the last Chamber of Commerce event."

If this is a cold call, you could say that his name appeared on a list of the leading businesses in your city. Here you are making use of a third-party introduction, even if it is a rather loose one.

3 Establishing credibility

This part deals with who you are and why the person on the line should listen to you. This is where I would say, for example: "I'm an international sales expert. I help sales

leaders like you build high performance sales teams." That lets him know who I am and how I help businesses like his.

4 Making your offer

This section deals with why you are really calling, what you are offering the person and what you would like him to do. Remember, people are only interested in what's in it for them.

You will have only a short time on the telephone, so what you say has to make that impact quickly. Let the prospect know there is no pressure, and because there is no charge for the consultation, he can only gain by speaking to you.

5 Getting a commitment

This part is referred to as the close, or better, the commitment. Most rookies make the mistake of asking the customer: "What's a good time for you to meet?" And the answer typically is, "Well, I'm really busy this week, so can you call me back in three weeks?"

You need to ask the prospect leading questions that are close-ended.

Ask him to commit

to a day of the week and then, to a part of that day. Then, narrow down the time. You could say: "How about Wednesday at 2pm?"

6 Ending your call

In the final part of the call, thank the prospect for his time and let him know that you are looking forward to speaking with him again or meeting him. Repeat the day and time of the appointment.

Ask him to call you if anything comes up between now and the date of the meeting. Provide him with your contact details so he can call you to reschedule, if necessary.

It is important to ask: "How will this decision ultimately be made?" to find out the true decision maker.

Then ask: "How about we invite him to join our meeting?" These questions help you to ensure that you will meet someone with the authority to make buying decisions.

One final note

The script is just a guideline - don't read it word for word while you are speaking to a prospect. Practise your script in front of a mirror or rehearse with colleagues.

Also, be sure to track the number of calls you make, the number of contacts you speak with, the number of appointments you schedule and so on.

By following this strategy for creating telephone scripts, you will do a much better job of actually engaging prospects on your calls, booking more appointments and getting in front of more prospects. - Singapore Straits Times / Asia News Network

■ Article by Tom Abbott, an international sales expert, author, coach and keynote speaker. He works with organisations worldwide to help them build high-performance sales teams.

When talking to clients, telemarketers need not follow their script word for word. - Filepic

