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VOL. 125 | NO. 129 | Tuesday, July 06, 2010

## Sales Call Success Is All In The Prep

LORI TURNER

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I'm often asked about the qualities that separate the good from the great in sales. At the top of my list are a drive for success, rapport-building, discipline and fearlessly asking for the business.

An overlooked quality is the willingness to invest in call prep – the research and planning necessary to prepare for an initial call to a prospect as well as your first in-person meeting.

Too many sales reps dial for dollars – calling as many prospects as they can, using the same canned approach.

Why not work smarter vs. harder? Call prep reduces the number of prospects you call by increasing your call success ratio. It's the difference between getting the meeting or not, or closing the deal or not.

You have one opportunity to make a good first impression. And unless you have an unlimited supply of good prospects, you need to nail it.

The most obvious research sources are online. Start with the prospect's website, Google, LinkedIn and Facebook. Your objective is to get a glimpse into the prospect's background and what makes him tick.

What are you trying to achieve with your prep before that initial prospect call?

Identify multiple points of connection to build rapport on the call and during the meeting. A point of connection is simply an icebreaker you'll use to build rapport with a prospect such as a common acquaintance, cause they are passionate about, or a school they attended.

Gather intelligence to form a creative approach for landing the meeting. For instance, check on LinkedIn for organizations they are active with. You might plan to bump into them at that organization's event. Even better, ask a member you know to make an introduction.

Uncover information that allows you to craft a meaningful "what's in it for them" statement. "I want to tell you about our services," does not qualify. If you were in your prospect's shoes, what would make it difficult to decline a meeting with you?

After you've landed the meeting, script what you're going to say, and rehearse it. The practice should relax you and allow you to adapt to the conversation with greater confidence. It will keep you from focusing on what you're going to say next vs. listening intently to what your prospect says, restating for understanding, and asking follow-up questions.

When rehearsing, make you know what you'll open and close with – your "rapport builders;" identify three main educational points; have thoughtful questions to help the prospect realize a need for what you offer; have a script that includes what differentiates you and why that's meaningful to the prospect; anticipate prospect objections and how to overcome them.

Strategic planning and creative tactics may seem slightly foreign for something as simple as a phone call or sales meeting. Just remember what you are really doing is planning your way to success.



Lori Turner

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