

Preparation and Pre-Call Planning...

Your Road Map to Success

In this changing world of selling, preparation and pre-call planning are essential to assure quality sales calls! In fact, for today's Sales Professionals, preparation is more important than the actual sales presentation. Not convinced? Salespeople have less and less time to invest in face-to-face selling. The importance that salespeople place on their personal sales calls will be reflected by the amount of preparation they do before the calls, including completing a Pre-Call Planning form. Salespeople can no longer "wing" their calls. They are no different than airplane pilots who go through their "pre-flight checklists" before taking off. What "pre-call planning" checklists do you go through before taking off on your sales calls? Now do we have your attention? Good...read on!

Statistics reveal that, at one time, salespeople invested approximately 40% of their time in front of customers. Today, that figure is roughly around 25%. Emphasis must be placed on making QUALITY calls, not quantity. When you are in front of your customers, are you prepared to SELL, not tell? Can you deliver a better message in a shorter period of time? You have no choice! How? Begin with pre-call planning and utilize what we refer to as the "5 A's Selling Process"...a systematic and logical procedure that begins with a call objective and continues until the sale is reached. It becomes your framework — or roadmap — to visualize SUCCESS. Are you ready?

Step 1 –

Approach, reflects your sales call objective and the reason or purpose for the call. What do you say after, "How are things?", "How's the family?", or "Did you see the game

last night?" Ask an interest-creating remark or question to set the stage and attract the customer's attention. Your Approach should be planned (not canned), reflecting your personality and selling style.

Step 2 –

Analysis, is the weakest step in selling. Salespeople should listen first and talk second, but often don't. Do you plan and prepare open-ended and close-ended questions? You should! How can you possibly make recommendations to your customers without doing an Analysis first? You can't! Until you uncover or "discover" their true needs and wants, your customers won't perceive value in your offering. Probing (asking questions) is a lost art in selling today. But you can find it again by becoming a Consultative-Partner to your customers. What does that mean? As a Consultative-Partner,

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continued



you conduct an objective Analysis to identify the customer's needs, create wants and provide answers that utilize your products and services. You create a partnership relationship with the customer, take part in their problem solving and make recommendations to grow their business.

Step 3 –

Active Presentation, is a salesperson's favorite step of the Selling Process. Why? Because it's finally time for you to talk! If you did the proper planning and executed Step 2, Analysis, then in Step 3 you repeat back to the customer what they told you they want (as it relates to your products and services). This planning step is critical as you equate your unique factors and value-added services to benefits so the customer perceives value and buys from you. Preparation is required so you don't "miss the mark" with your customers or talk too much and confuse them.

Step 4 –

Answer Objections, removes any roadblocks to the sale and allows you to gain conviction with your customers. Do you receive the same or similar objections on each call? Do you

anticipate objections and try to head them off before they are raised? Or, do you have prepared responses, answer the objections and go for a trial close? Either way, pre-call planning is essential in order to respond to and handle objections to the satisfaction of your customers, which leads to the SALES!

Step 5 –

Always Be Closing, has a double meaning. You can close anywhere in the Selling Process and continue to close until the customer agrees to action. Remember, the close relates to your call objective so you can close the moment you Approach. Pre-call planning enables you to arrive at this destination, which is the culmination of the Selling Process.

Today's selling requires proper execution of sales fundamentals, similar to what professional athletes do in sports. Sales Professionals must become brilliant in sales techniques in order to sell value-added. It all starts with proper preparation and pre-call planning. Allow the 5 A's Selling Process to become your roadmap for planning and sales success.

Good luck and good selling!



by Bob Butler

As the second generation President/CEO of Butler Learning Systems (BLS), a training publisher offering over 30 programs in Sales, Service and Leadership Development, Bob Butler considers himself a "product of the product." As a facilitator, author, speaker and coach, his vast knowledge and experience stems from working with all levels of associates in a variety of industries. Bob's approach to training and adult education is unique...BLS seminars are learner-centered versus teacher-focused, with a hands-on approach. Program materials can be customized to each organization's goals, culture and objectives for a truly unique, personalized training experience.

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