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Secrets of Top Salespeople

.Fine-tune goals for each sales call. Obviously, the primary objective for each call is to get an order. The most effective types of goals are...

Specific. Signing a long-term contract or bringing in an order for 50 cases, at \$125 per case.

Ambitious. If the prospect's company is growing, this could indicate going for a bigger order. Or—it could mean selling a new product or service to an established customer.

Realistic. Gauging sales to the prospect's level of operations...not simply to add to the buyer's inventory.

Targeted. To meet a specific customer need.

.Establish secondary goals for each call. Top salespeople use these goals as contingency plans if the primary objective is not achieved.

Typical secondary objectives:

Get a trial order...convince the prospect that you should meet with his/her boss at a specific time in the future...confirm that date.

.Earn the right to proceed with the sales call. Never assume a customer is delighted to talk to you. Be brief, to the point—and then be gone.

Demonstrate knowledge of the customer's business, executives and recent initiatives the company has taken.

Make an initial benefit statement describing how you've helped other companies in their particular industry.

.Listen. Top salespeople typically let the customer do most of the talking during a sales call. While the customer talks, the salesperson stays connected by paraphrasing...clarifying...confirming.

.Ask the right questions at the right time.

Key: Prepare a probing strategy for each sales call. Guidelines...

Orientation questions—about the company, the prospect's department, its priorities, etc.

Needs questions—opportunities the company believes it can ex-

plot...problems it has to overcome.

Effect questions—where top salespeople make the customer feel the problem in his/her gut. Ask the prospect...

•What will happen to your department if you don't find a way to solve that problem before the next budget?

•Suppose you don't get into that market with a successful product this year?

Key: Make the consequences graphic to the prospect before presenting the solution—i.e., buying what you came to sell.

.Find the controlling need. Look for exactly what the prospect's most important need is. Ask the prospect...

•What is really important to you—right now?

•What do you really need to do the job? Press for such a detailed response as: *Our cost has to come in under \$100 a unit or we can't do it.*

.Offer a solution. Don't do this until you are at least halfway into the sales call, however. Once you've listened, made notes, put stars next to the things that are really important, say: *I'm pretty sure I understand what your problem is now. I think we have a way to help you.*

.Recognize and respond to objections. Mediocre salespeople try to steamroll over objections, usually because they are not prepared to meet them.

Top salespeople *anticipate* objections. Before making the sales call, they find out from other salespeople and sales managers what typical objections are for that industry. They gather information and ideas from company resources to respond appropriately to each and every one.

Example: Let's take a short break. I sense that you're not satisfied with my explanation. You've told me two things that you think are unsatisfactory about what we have to offer. Are those your only concerns—or is there anything else?

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