

March 07

Do You Have A Passion For Prospecting?

In the last two newsletters, we laid out the 20 biggest mistakes that salespeople make. But if you had to pick **just one** of those 20 things to focus on, we'd say choose **prospecting**. That's because the single biggest reason that salespeople fail is a lack of prospects.

Not having enough prospects sets off a downward spiral that eats away at every aspect of your career:

- **First, it can undermine your attitude** – let's face it, it's difficult to project positive confidence when you're not sure you have any opportunities for success.
- **Next it begins to erode your positioning** – you appear more and more desperate to your dwindling prospect list.
- **Then it cuts into your ability to demand full price** – you can't afford to lose any sale when you don't have another prospect waiting in the wings.
- **Finally, your selling skills may start to dull** – you don't have the opportunity to use and develop them with real live prospects on a consistent basis.

Of course, facing these conditions can only do more damage to your confidence, leaving you caught in a vicious cycle that's hard to escape. **So, the only solution is to make**

prospecting your absolute, number one priority every single day. If you're like most salespeople you're probably thinking:

"But I've got this big presentation today..."

"But I've got to turn in my expense reports this week..."

"But I've got to pay a visit to one of my biggest accounts soon..."

The problem is, all of those things are urgent; they have short-term consequences that you just can't ignore. However, if you don't make a conscientious effort to set aside time and energy for prospecting, it won't be long before you don't have any big presentations to give, no expenses to report and no accounts to call on.

Think of the old-fashioned well pump that requires a little water to "prime" it each time. The sales presentation you're going to deliver tomorrow is like the urgent need for water – you just can't ignore it. **But focusing all of your attention on your immediate tasks is like drinking that last cup of water – you'll soon run dry.**

Salespeople who really excel at prospecting go far beyond just setting aside time for it. For them, it's a passion. **They have an insatiable thirst for finding new opportunities and an inquisitive nature that helps them uncover those opportunities.**

www.brooksgroup.com

The IMPACT Sales Bulletin © 2007 The Brooks Group. All Rights Reserved. For article reprint permission, please contact info@thebrooksgroup.com

And they never stop prospecting no matter how long they've been selling or how many prospects they have lined up.

Their quest for finding new prospects is rooted in the belief that they have a product or service that is truly valuable. ***These salespeople genuinely want to get their product into the hands of people who want or need it.*** That's what motivates them to keep searching high and low for every potential prospect and it's also what helps them find prospects that other salespeople overlook.

So, how can you develop a passion for prospecting?

A good place to start is with your existing customers. It's worth taking a little time to look at letters, emails, testimonials and conversations to figure out exactly what people find valuable in doing business with you. That's the foundation. Once you gain a deep understanding of your existing customers, you can use that information to uncover more potential prospects that might have similar needs, desires and problems that your product can satisfy.

Studying what your customers say has another important benefit – there's no better way to learn to articulate the value of your product to potential prospects. Take note of the benefits and the results that your customers describe and learn to use the words that come directly from your customers.

How can you build an inquisitive nature that will help you uncover more opportunities?

The key lies in questions. Most salespeople have a very limited view of questions. They think in terms of asking the prospect questions during the active selling phase. But in order to get there, you'll have to ask lots of questions of lots of people – including yourself.

What are the questions you'll need to ask? They're fairly easy to remember and they fall under the age old categories of why, what, when and how questions.

1. ***Why*** questions are great for helping you prioritize your own time. They'll help you decide where to concentrate your efforts at any given time. These questions can also help you determine which approach you should use with each prospect.

Helpful Why Questions:

- Why would this prospect be in a position to make a purchase decision now?
- Why might they resist buying at this point?
- Why would my timing be especially good or bad at this point in time?
- Why might I get a particularly good (or bad) hearing now?
- Why would my product or service be particularly appealing?
- Why might it be unappealing?

2. ***What*** questions empower you to target a specific prospect's wants, needs and problems so that you can create a powerful and persuasive presentation.

Useful What Questions:

- What will this prospect find most attractive about my product or service?
 - What might they find least attractive?
 - What should I do to get this prospect's attention?
 - What do I need to know about this person? Their organization? Their preference for buying?
 - What will my objective be for the first call?
 - What do I have to do to get an appointment?
3. **When** questions are perhaps the most underutilized tool in a salesperson's toolbox. When questions give you the power to be in front of your prospects when they are most receptive to your message. They can also help you target prospects that you might otherwise be unable to reach.

Productive When Questions:

- When is the best time for me to prospect? When am I at my best? When is this prospect's schedule likely to be the lightest? Most hectic?
 - When is the most likely time that I will be able to make contact with this prospect? When is the least productive?
 - When should I contact this prospect again if my first efforts fail?
4. **How** questions are the most critical for you in your prospecting success. You'll find that a lot of

your "how" questions are ones that you'll want to ask yourself as you continually develop and hone your prospecting strategy.

How Questions That Work:

- How can I prospect more productively without hurting my face-to-face sales time?
- How can I be more effective at prospecting?
- How can I improve my prospecting skills?
- How can I maximize my skills in approaching tough prospects?
- How can I follow up on every prospect more effectively?

So how can you begin to find the answers to these questions? You can start by doing some investigating on your own. Here are ten places to look for information about potential prospects:

1. The internet. Start with the prospect's website, then dig deeper for information from other sources – articles, blog entries, press releases, customer comments, etc.
2. Annual reports, if available.
3. Trade journals, magazines, or newspapers with articles about the prospect.
4. People the prospect sells to or buys from (NOT those that are your direct competitors).
5. People who know the organization through any sort of interaction with the prospect.

6. People who work at the prospect's place of business.
7. Current customers who know the organization.
8. Prospect's internal newsletters or public documents.
9. Prospect's technical manual or warranty documents.

10. Prospect's promotional materials.

The secret to prospecting is to leave no stone unturned. Keep asking questions of yourself, of your network of colleagues, of your internal advocates and never stop digging for answers that might lead you to your next prospect.

Want More Proven Techniques to Take You to the Top?

Check out the best-selling book, [Sales Techniques](#). You'll find ideas and strategies that you can use in every step of the sale. The questions in this article are just the tip of the iceberg – there's valuable information on every page. And the best part is, it's all clearly explained and organized into an easy-to-implement selling system that you can start using right away. Take a look:

[Sales Techniques Book](#)

No time for reading in your busy schedule?
Have someone read it to you at your convenience:

[Get the audio book](#)