

Seller's Challenge: Conduct a Sales Call that Drives the Buying Process Forward

The challenge in conducting an effective sales call is to overcome many of the obstacles that arise during the call, making sure to engage the customer, probe and listen to the customer's interests, adapt to the stakeholder's communication style, and manage their concerns.

Ten Reasons Why Sales Call Fail

1. Sellers fail to articulate a clear focus that resonates with the buyer.
2. Sellers fail to manage time effectively.
3. Sellers talk too much.
4. Sellers make the meeting seem like an interrogation.
5. Sellers use buzzwords that are misleading or artificial.
6. Sellers fail to follow-up on a buyer's comment or contribution.
7. Sellers don't understand the buyer's business model.
8. Sellers fail to translate the conversation into action.
9. Sellers push product-not solutions.
10. Sellers fail to differentiate their product or solution.

How Top Performers Manage & Elevate Their Sales Calls



Three Types of Listening

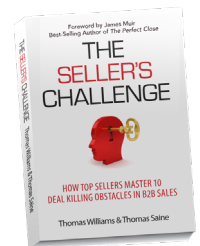
1. Selective Listening: This is hearing only what we want to hear. We filter the speaker's content based upon our pre-existing assumptions and expectations. Our minds become a mental bunker that allows only certain words or phrases to enter. We hear select portions of the message and formulate our reply without waiting for the speaker to finish. If you find yourself taking a "mental vacation" while listening, you are using selective listening. The downfall is that you often miss key pieces of relevant information.

2. Responsive Listening: We listen closely for intent and context. We encourage the speaker to keep talking. Often the listener will nod their head in agreement or use phrases such as "I understand," "Please tell me more," or "Please elaborate."

3. Reflective Listening: Reflective listening means repeating back parts of a message to confirm mutual understanding. It assures the speaker that he or she has been understood. For example, a reflective listener may say, "I want to make sure I understand you correctly. You are looking for a solution that is easy for your staff, takes the same or a reduced footprint on the table, and can process a minimum of X tests per day with an uptime of 95% at or below \$25,000. Is that correct?"

Eight Tips to Enhance Your Listening Skills

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|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Stop talking | 3. Defer judgment | 5. Pay attention to non-verbal cues | 7. Be patient |
| 2. Pay attention and make eye contact | 4. Demonstrate you are listening | 6. Ask questions for clarification | 8. Provide feedback |



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How Top Performers Use Questions

1. Focus on the buyer
2. Plan a conversation not an interrogation
3. Listen actively
4. Ask one question at a time, not two
5. Dig deeper
6. Ask for coaching
7. Educate
8. End the call by asking for action

"A sales concern is an expression by a stakeholder that a barrier exists between what they want and need before they will do business with you."

Types of Sales Concerns

1. Timing
2. Price
3. Politics
4. Misunderstanding or confusion
5. Suspicion, doubt or skepticism
6. Perception of risk
7. Complaint

Question Types

Verification: A question that is used at the beginning of the sales call to confirm information that you have previously learned to ensure nothing has changed in the interim time period. This question is also used at any point during the call to summarize information that you have learned to ensure you understand the content correctly.

Exploration: Questions designed to obtain facts, details and information that are unknown by the seller. These questions help the seller learn the current situation.

Alternative: These questions often provoke or challenge the stakeholders thinking by exploring options or new ways of doing things, and the consequences of not taking action.

Preference: A question that determines which solution will be endorsed by the stakeholder? It's used once the sales representative has presented their product, service or solution and connected it to the stakeholder's problem, opportunity or threat. It's designed to determine if they are the preferred solution or someone else.

Advance: A question that would provide a measurable commitment that would move the sales opportunity forward. It must be measurable and an appropriate action for the stakeholder based on their job and the position of the sales opportunity within the buying process.

Handling Buyer Concerns

- **Listen:** Resist the tendency to answer a concern immediately or to become defensive. Instead listen attentively to thoroughly understand the concern. Demonstrate empathy to reduce resistance. Take notes if it helps you.
- **Acknowledge:** Say something to show that you heard what was said. For example: "I understand your concern, comment, frustration, etc." It is important that you acknowledge and not agree. At this point, you are not agreeing with them, but you are acknowledging their point of view.
- **Investigate:** Ask permission to raise questions that aid in understanding vital issues. Then ask a question or several. Seek to clarify your understanding of what you have heard. Don't assume you have an understanding; ask a question to verify it. You can't effectively answer a concern unless you thoroughly understand it. Example: "What exactly did you mean?" "Can you elaborate a bit more on the importance of that point to you and the organization?" It's also very important at this stage to ensure there is only one concern. Always ask, "Is there anything else that concerns you?"
- **Reframe:** The purpose of the reframe is to verify that you understand the concern correctly. Example: "So am I understanding you correctly that you want XXX?"
- **Educate and Confirm:** This is where you provide your response to the concern in a rational and unemotional manner and confirm that your response handles their concern. If it does not handle the concern, then you will need to restart the process until a positive resolution has been achieved. If proof exists, use it. Proof can be a reference, testimonial, case study, financial document, etc. Example: "Many of our clients have expressed a similar concern. One thing to consider is that . . ."

