



## A Smoker's Break Can be Your Break



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Art Waskey is a speaker who truly delivers. In addition to a 45 year career in sales and marketing, Art is the author of multiple books on selling and a monthly column *The Art of Sales*. He shares these insights as an in demand event and conference speaker as well as leadership coach.

Making prospective calls is always an important part of a sales reps' agenda. I noticed one of our most effective closers, someone who could build relationships rapidly, was not seeking out enough new prospects. She had been spending too much time serving existing accounts and this had diminished her new business closings.

One day, she asked me to assist her on an urgent service call with one of her best accounts. After we completed the meeting successfully, I suggested we make a couple quick cold calls on near-by accounts. She insisted she had several pressing issues with existing accounts to follow up on and didn't have the time.

I was irritated but determined to make my point that she wasn't closing enough prospective business. We were in separate cars, so I was able to stop

at the closest competitive account I could find. I had seen this account named once on the rep's target account call list. While I didn't even know what this prospect manufactured, I was determined to prove to my rep that cold calling yielded new accounts. I noticed a couple people at the corner of the manufacturer's building on a smoking break. I got out of my car and introduced myself to one of them.

I asked, "How long have you been with this company?" We talked about his background for about 15 minutes, and then I gave him my company 30-second introductory speech. Upon asking if he thought they had any issues with their current supplier, he gave me some valuable information.

He also agreed to allow me to get our rep on his cell phone. When she answered, I turned to the prospect and asked him what his job was, "Oh, I'm



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the purchasing agent!" He gave the sales rep an appointment.

Our rep did her normal great job following up with the customer. Within a couple months she had closed the account and our company has enjoyed their business for the last 20 years.

Remember to always take time to call on prospects before you leave a geographic area. A good way to break into competitive accounts is to look for employees on breaks, changing shifts, or standing by an open door. These are quick ways to get information and avoid wasting time in the otherwise cold front office. If you get nothing more than a company name and address, you can always go back to the office and look their information on the internet.

As salespeople, we like helping our existing accounts – it's a form of gratitude. It feels good to be able to help solve their issues, make a delivery, get pricing, etc., but are you taking on responsibilities that could easily be delegated to someone else on the staff? As a sales rep our time is best spent growing our business by expanding your network. The best salespeople I know aren't happy unless they are building new relationships.

### FIVE KEY SALES TAKEAWAYS

1. Do you spend too much time serving existing accounts and not enough focused on new business?
2. Take time to call on prospects before you leave a geographic area.
3. A good way to break into competitive accounts is to look for employees on breaks, changing shifts, or standing by an open door.
4. Do you need to delegate more existing account service responsibilities to others in the company?
5. Isn't your best time spent growing business by building your network?