



Appointments that Count



Art Waskey

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.

One of our new reps recently came to me with a common complaint—he could not get a prospect, one he had visited several times, to return his calls. In fact, he was unable to get past the receptionist, who continued to say that the purchasing agent was too busy to see him.

I decided to try another tactic. I called the purchasing agent's direct line and using the rep's name, left this voicemail: "Hi Jack, this is Mark with [company]. I have tried several times to see you but with our busy schedules, we have not connected. I will be in your area next Thursday and would like to send you an appointment for a 10:00 AM meeting. I hope to see you then. Thanks." Then I emailed him an appointment.

The purchasing agent called back within an hour. Why? When you specify a time and date with a calendar

appointment the recipient needs to take some type of action. Sometimes the response is positive. In this case, the purchasing agent advised that he was happy with his current supplier and declined our company's invitation. So while we were able to get a response, it remained a "brush-off" and a lost opportunity.

The purchasing agent had used a quick and familiar excuse, "I am happy with my current supplier." Another popular sales blocker is, "Just send me your information and I'll get back to you." And we have all heard, "Can you send me a quote on the following items?" A successful salesperson knows that these comments are all defensive actions.

So how do you get a face-to-face appointment with someone and avoid these brush-offs? Add a next step. Ignore the negative comments and



Appointments that Count

respond with a more positive suggestion, such as, “I can understand that you are very busy, and I will only take a few minutes of your time to introduce myself and our products. Should your current supplier backorder an urgent product, please keep me in mind. I’d be glad to bring it to you right away.” Memorize this response. Seldom will it fail to get you an appointment.

When you do get that visit, consider asking your prospect these situational questions: How long have you been with [company]? What are your responsibilities? What products/services do you provide? These interview-type questions encourage the potential customer to talk about himself and lead him to feel more comfortable with you. Experience has taught me that as a prospect becomes more at ease, he is more apt to transition

into sharing information about his need, or more specifically, a problem he may have with the current supplier.

I have found that it generally only takes about 20 minutes of shared time for a prospect to begin to trust you. What you do with that trust is crucial. If the prospect feels you received the information to manipulate him, he will become highly offended and shut off all future communications. One potential customer shared confidential family information with me. I do not believe I coerced him to do so in any way, but he felt I did and quickly ended our relationship.

If your relationship with a new client is on track and trust has been established, he will likely begin to share his current supplier problems with you and provide information about products and services his company

BIG TAKEAWAYS

- 1. To get a call-back** leave the message, “I have tried several times to see you but with our busy schedules, we have not connected. I will be in your area next Thursday and would like to send you an appointment for 10:00 AM. I hope to see you then. Thanks.” Then, email an appointment.
- 2. When you specify a time and date** with a calendar appointment the recipient needs to take some type of action.
- 3. A successful salesperson** knows that “brush off” comments should be interpreted as sales defenses.
- 4. When you visit the prospect** consider asking situational questions.