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3 steps to getting a sales meeting

By Alan Fairweather

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The best way to get a new customer is to clearly identify who you want to do business with and then get in front of them. They can then see what you look like, possibly see what your product looks like and also examine any data or statistics you might have. It gives you the ideal opportunity to start building a positive working relationship with your potential customer.

Advertising, direct mail, web sites and telesales all have their place but nothing beats the face to face interview. The first challenge is, of course, getting to speak to your prospect and arrange a meeting.

When you phone your prospect's organisation it's highly possible you won't get through initially even if you have their direct number. There's always an assistant, a colleague or voice mail to deal with.

1 Deal with the other person

1. Always be pleasant and polite. Use the person's name as soon as you know it but not over familiar.
2. Use your prospects name and your name; say – "Will you please tell John Smith that Alan Fairweather is on the phone for him."
3. If you're asked what it's about, say – "It's about the contents of a letter Mr Smith has received. (More later) Will you tell him that Alan Fairweather is on the phone for

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him please!"

4.If you're told that your prospect is in a meeting, find out what time they'll be out of the meeting and ask if it that would be a good time to call.

5.Thank the person for their help and say – "I'll call back at 3.30 and look forward to speaking to John then. Thanks for your help Mary."

None of this is easy but persevere and don't be nuisance. Always be friendly, firm and courteous with Mary.

It sometimes helps to send a brief letter to your prospect explaining that you'll call to arrange a short meeting. (Don't use the word appointment). Briefly state your product or service benefit or even a couple of questions at the start of the letter.

But don't make it a sales letter and don't enclose literature. (Your prospect gets enough of the stuff).

2 Deal with voice mail:

1.Give your name, business name and phone number. Speak slow and clear, warm, friendly and businesslike.

2.Say what you do – "Were the people who minimise production time and cost on..... I'd appreciate the courtesy of a return call on"

3.You might want to make an appointment to call – "I appreciate you're very busy Mr Smith, however I have some interesting information for you. I'll call back at 3pm and would be pleased if you'd speak to me."

4.Follow up with a fax or email and make it human.

5.Leave your phone number again, slow and clear.

Again this is a challenge, however if you sound warm and friendly and that you

could be worth talking to, then you'll get call backs.

Always keep customer details

handy because when prospects call back they say – "Hi Alan, its Fred I'm returning your call."

If you made twenty calls that day you may not initially know who Fred is, so be prepared.

3 Sell the meeting

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Once you speak to your prospect on the 'phone you need to do a good selling job to get the meeting.

Most of the time they're going to say something like – "I'm not really interested, we already have a supplier, I'm a bit busy at present."

Always keep in mind that the majority of prospects are reasonable human beings and they have nothing against you personally. There's also a strong possibility that they'll welcome a visit from you if you sound warm, friendly and businesslike.

If you sound like you have some worthwhile information to impart and you don't sound pushy or manipulative then you're more likely to get that meeting.

Plan your call carefully and consider the following.

1. Greeting – Speak slowly and clearly using the prospects name, your name, and your business name

2. Courtesy – Ask if it's convenient to speak

3. Introduction – Say what you do and provide a benefit to the prospect

4. Close – Ask for a short meeting at mutually convenient time

5. Deal with resistance – Acknowledge what the prospect says, outweigh with a benefit and close again

6. Don't use the word "appointment"

7. Don't start selling your product/service on the 'phone only sell the meeting

8. Don't say you'll send literature, say you'll bring it with you

9. Don't be pushy, be persistent and pleasant

10. Have a fall-back position. If they won't see you this time then ask if it would be OK to 'phone at an agreed time in the future – and make sure you do so.

You won't win them all however if you sound professional and pleasant, potential customers are more likely to see you, so don't give up.

I built my business initially by phoning prospects, arranging meetings and then selling my services, I had success, so can you.

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Discover how you can generate more business without having to cold call!

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Alan Fairweather is the author of "How to get More Sales without Selling" This book is packed with practical things that you can do to - get customers to come to you .

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Alan Fairweather is the author of four ebooks in the "Howto get More Sales" series. Lots of practical actions you can take to build your business and motivate your team.–www.howtogetmoresales.com

Agendas Make Meetings Productive

By Martin Haworth

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Meetings take up time and effort, so they need to be very productive and useful. In meetings, one aspect worthy of focus is how well you organise your meetings and having a great agenda does just that.

Having a meeting agenda template that works well for you, week in, week out, creates a consistency which gets your people bought into the meeting process. Delivering an efficiency and effectiveness which makes the most of the valuable time you have together. Key points to note are:–

Circulate

Share your agenda in good time, well before your meeting (with reading material for preview). This gives time for review, preparation and challenge.

RolesIn a meeting there are various roles to be taken on from the start. Chair, notetaker, facilitator, reviewer and other, more specific roles. These should be clearly stated on the agenda in advance of the meeting.

Items for Discussion

Items on your agenda need to be selected carefully and only be relevant for the grouping of people

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who get together. Time is **precious**, so make sure that when together, only things which need everyone's input are given time.

Set Timings Get clear on your agenda just how long the meeting will last and how long will be devoted to individual items on it. This gives clear indications of what will happen in meeting.

Ground Rules

Within your agenda will be some rules of how the meeting process will work. It is important to set standards of behaviour which everyone signs up to.

AOB

Often included in agendas, this item is one that really should not be there. Good preplanning **before** the agenda goes out should mean that all items are included at that point and, where dispute occurs, the meeting lead takes a decision. AOB can easily take a meeting off the rails and lead to missing time agreements.

Action Points

As the meeting progresses there will be action points that individual meeting members will be accountable for. By having a spot on the agenda for a quick review, prior to circulating these in writing, everyone will be clear on what is expected of them.

Parked Items

Sometimes during a meeting, items arise which whilst important, are outside the scope of that particular meeting. So by both 'parking' them during the meeting, thus validating their importance, and having a specific point to check the next steps for them is clear, they do receive attention. This then allows the meeting purpose to be maintained.

Next Meeting By ensuring the date of the next meeting is an agenda item, this serves three purposes. It indicates to the meeting attendees follow up meetings

It gives an indication of when agreed action points from the meeting are likely to be required. Finally, it reminds the person responsible for the agenda to agree a clear date during the meeting – if not, it is likely to slip.

Meeting Review

Your agenda should also be an ongoing learning tool. As such, and to ensure your meetings truly make a difference, there is a real benefit in reviewing how things have worked in the meeting – for **all** participants. Agenda it.

© 2005 **Martin Haworth** is a Business and Management Coach. He works worldwide, mainly by phone, with small business owners, managers and corporate leaders. He has hundreds of hints, tips and ideas at his website,

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