

Prospecting – Choices: Where will you choose to be tomorrow?

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By Bill Truax

In sales it sometimes seems as if you are forced into a series of activities that don't help you accomplish your goals. Customer service, proposal preparation, you may feel as if you are trapped into a certain mode of conduct.

I once believed that sales was sort of a narrow vocation, especially if you have a small variety of products or services to offer. But now I am convinced that sales offers more options than any other job. It is all based on choices.

Choices are what got you to where you are today and the choices you are making today will get you to where you will be tomorrow. One of the problems faced by sales professionals is that you have the option of making far too many choices.

You make so many choices everyday that you often don't even consider them choices anymore, they are simply habits. Your daily routine each morning, your route to and from work, eating, exercise (or lack of it), etc.

Good or bad, you tend to follow a lot of habits everyday.

When it comes to Prospecting and making Cold Calls, you often choose to avoid making them. This is a bad habit, for obvious reasons. Yet I work with sales people all the time who make this choice, and know it.

Think how your life would be different if you had the habit of Prospecting on a regular basis every day. How would your sales life improve? With a continuous flow of prospects, would you have reduced stress?

Become a student of your self – learn how you work most effectively. Determine how you can add Prospecting to your daily activities. For example, I work best by segmenting my work. If I am telemarketing, I will make a series of calls for perhaps 30 minutes, then go onto some other activity.

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I recently heard a speaker say, "discipline is not ability, it is accomplishment."

We have a small business. I am 100% of the sales force. We offer training programs, products, and services. There are many times that I can very easily justify not Prospecting for days and even weeks at a time. I have far too many things to do.

But when my work load slows a little, I am in the same situation I warn others about. Slowing business and few prospects. It becomes a really stupid cycle. Prospect like mad, get a lot of activity started, stop Prospecting and do the work. Then the work trails off and you have to Prospect like crazy again. You are simply going from peak to valley to peak and valley again.

Add to that the need for "crisis prospecting" because of cash flow problems and you have the

additional burden of trying to sell too soon in your relationship with those prospects. Crisis Prospecting occurs when you haven't prospected sufficiently and you are quickly running out of business.

All this can be prevented by simply choosing to set up a system of Prospecting on a regular basis. That is several times a week for me. It may be more or less often for you, depending on your product lines and markets. Regardless, a regular system of Prospecting and making Cold calls is one choice that will make life a lot more fun.

This also requires you to have an adequate number of leads. You can't call on people if you don't know who they are. Therefore get a good source of leads. I use the Ohio Industrial Directory by Harris Publishing. Add to that the Fortune 1,000 company listing, and observation when in the field and you should have a good backlog of companies to call on.

I put each lead on an index card with the phone number and place it in an index card box behind the date card that will remind you to call them. If you are in the field making calls, you can take you card box with you and make cold calls at companies as you see them. This is a great way to get your batteries "re-charged." It also creates a lot of new activity, so be careful not to prospect too much. You still have other responsibilities.

If you chose to make all of those prospecting calls 6 months ago, where would you be now? If you choose to start making those prospecting calls on a regular basis now, where will you be in 6 months?

So you see, it all boils down to a simple matter of choice. You are where you are today because of the choices you made in the past. Where will you choose to be tomorrow?

Sell Well and Often
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Bill Truax is a Sales Management and Field Operations Consultant living in Cleveland, Oh. He conducts Sales Team Assessments, conducts Management and Leadership development programs, and works with Field Sales Professionals both in the field and in workshops. He has written 3 books and recorded 2 CD's on Prospecting and Making Cold Calls and conducts a variety of skill based seminars, workshops, and train the trainer programs. Visit his website at

www.BlitzCall.com

The Danger of Success©

By Bill Truax

Keep Your Prospecting Muscles in Shape!

The other day I was visiting with one of my neighbors for the first time in a couple of years. We live in an area where we wave to each other a lot, but don't seem to talk much. As the conversation continued we started talking about how our respective companies were doing. He owns a chemical blending company with about 50 employees that is doing quite well.

I explained that our sales consulting and training business was doing pretty well also, and then he asked me the universal question I always seem to get. Do you know of anyone who is a good sales manager I can hire?

It seems as if a lot of smaller companies need a good sales manager. I wish we could manufacture sales managers, we would make a fortune.

As we talked further he said that he was looking for someone who can expand their markets and grow their business with new customers. That of course set off an alarm in my brain, because that means Prospecting.

At this point I mentioned that what he needs is not so much a sales manager as someone who can prospect effectively. He chuckled slightly said I was right and then said "I have forgotten how to Prospect."

Now here is a man who started this company himself. At the beginning he was the head of production, operations, and sales. He did everything including prospecting so well that the business has grown to where it is today in just about 12 years. Yet he claims to have forgotten how to Prospect.

My response was that he probably hasn't forgotten how, his prospecting skills have simply atrophied. He agreed.

One of the biggest problems all of us face is the danger of success. We go out, grow a territory or market with hard work and lots of Prospecting. Then as we are reaping the benefits of all that effort we begin to discontinue the very things that brought us that success.

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And the first thing virtually all sales people stop doing is Prospecting. Primarily because it is the one aspect of sales that exposes us to the most amount of rejection. Yet it is also the one area that can bring us the most reward. So the "risk" to Prospecting is matched and often surpassed by the "rewards." That is a great risks to reward ration – sure beats the lottery.

So how do we maintain a balance in our sales lives? Good question. With our BLITZ CALL® System for prospecting, for example, we suggest that you decide on a specific number of prospecting calls to make per week . Then simply make that number. We emphasize that you should not be concerned about what happens on each call. But you must make that number of calls.

We suggest you decide how many Prospecting calls to make, by using our method of Statistical "Prospecting" Control (S"P"C). Here is how to do just that.

- First, decide how many new customers you want in the next 12 months.
- Second, determine how many people you have to call on right now to get that number of new customers taking into account your sales skills, product line, markets, and so on.
- Finally, take that number and divide it by 40. 40 is the number of weeks most sales people are actually selling in a year.

The answer is the number of calls you need to make per week.

For example, let's say I want 40 new customers this year and my current closing rate is 20%, that is for every new customer I have to call on 5 Prospects. So in order to get 40 new customers, I will need to get 200 new Prospects.

Divide 200 by 40 and that tells me I have to make 5 Prospecting calls a week. Now that is pretty easy for any field sales professional.

Pretty simple. If you do this you won't have the up and down cycles so many people run into in sales. Keeping a constant flow of new prospects in your pipeline makes life a lot easier. Also, as you get better and better at Prospecting, you will have to make fewer and fewer Prospecting calls.

When you have an effective prospecting skill, don't let it atrophy simply because your business grows and you don't want to Prospect any more – times change. Now you know how to keep your prospecting muscles in shape

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