

Bill Farquharson's

# THE 25 BEST SALES TIPS EVER!



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Warm Up

# THREE SALES TRUTHS AND MY CORE SALES BELIEFS

# Warm Up: Three Sales Truths and My Core Sales Beliefs

Before we get any further, I think it's important for you to understand a few things about me and how/where I am rooted as a salesperson. It might help you understand the tips better.

I readily admit that few of these sales tips are original. I personally believe there is nothing new in sales training. It's all just six degrees of Dale Carnegie as far as I'm concerned. If I know the source of the tip, I'll include it. If it is an original, I'll point it out and shamelessly take full credit.

This is information that I've gathered over 40+ years of selling, teaching, and writing. During that time, I've been paying attention, observing what the successful are doing in order to succeed, and then incorporating their ideas into both my own sales practice and these sales tips. See if the following points don't make sense to you. They, like their author, are based in the fundamentals and no matter what happens to technology, the following Sales Truths do not change:

## Sales Truth #1: The Four Keys to Sales Success

1. Make high value, well-researched sales calls;
2. Call on accounts that suit you the best, i.e.,—that are in your target market;
3. Create and employ an effective prospecting process;
4. Be diligent, diligent, diligent.

Without going into great detail—there is probably another whole book to be written on this first truth—let me just sum up these four keys like this:

*If you make a high-value call to the right target market while applying an effective prospecting process with diligence, you will succeed 100% of the time. There is only one guarantee that I will ever give you as your sales trainer and that was it.*

## Turning Things Around

Are your sales—or those of your sales team—down? Look to this first sales fundamental ask yourself four questions:

- Am I making a high-value sales call?
- Do I have great leads to call on?
- Do I have a prospecting process?
- Am I being pleasantly persistent?

Answer those four questions with “Yes—Yes—Yes—Yes” and your success is inevitable. Inevitable! The sales needle is moving. You may not be able to see it, but even if the results are not there yet, you must believe that if you do “X,” “Y” will happen. There is seldom, if ever, instant

gratification in sales. This is one of the reasons why so many people wash out.

Delayed gratification is a difficult concept for people who live in our “now, if not sooner” society. But again, if you get these four keys right, you will succeed 100% of the time. I guarantee it.

Now that you are feeling all good about yourself because you know exactly what you must do in order to be successful, and you’re excited about building a book of loyal and profitable customers whom you are certain you will become good friends with over time, and are already envisioning a lifetime of success...let me give you an open-handed slap across the face with this next Sales Truth:

## Sales Truth #2: You Are Only As Good As the Last Job You Shipped

Once upon a time, there were “cradle-to-grave” customers; believe it or not, we actually held on to clients year after year and, for the most part, they were ours to lose. Price was important, sure, but relationships were highly valued, too, much more than they are today.

I remember one legacy salesperson in the first company I worked for who had done business with Liberty Mutual for 40 years. He would arrive in the office at the crack of noon, put in his three hours of work, and then head out, saying something about the burdens of having to decide between tennis and golf. We younger reps were in awe and saw his work dynamic as our goal. We believed fervently that if we worked hard to earn some bedrock clients of our own, they’d be with us forever. We, too, could have low handicaps, topspin backhands, and 15 hour work weeks.

It would be highly unusual for that kind of long-term relationship to exist today, given the increased focus on the bottom line and the disappearance of The Loyal Customer (more on that in an upcoming and equally sobering Sales Truth). Today the client’s memory lasts as long as the last order you shipped in. It’s not that relationships no longer exist, they do. It’s just that there is more of an emphasis on profitability and less on loyalty.

If you ever hear yourself say, “That company loves us,” it is the first step on a slippery slope that will lead to your hearing, “We are switching vendors.” Confidence kills. Similar to building a strong marriage, never assume that your work is done after the account has been secured and orders start coming in. Continue to act the way you did when you were dating and working hard to earn the relationship.

The next Sales Truth should help you set your expectations realistically and maybe even teach you some patience. Set your sights on the business horizon and focus on your sales activity, not the immediate results. Understanding and following the keys to sales success will always keep you moving in the right direction.

# Sales Truth #3: A Final Truth About Sales

At the end of the movie, *A League of Their Own*, Tom Hanks, the grizzled, alcoholic manager of an all-women baseball team, approaches his star player, Geena Davis, who is dressed in street clothes and preparing to go home because of the return of her husband, Bill Pullman (a fellow '82 UMass/Amherst grad, *thankyouverymuch*), and asks her, "Where are you going?" Davis replies, "I quit. It just got too hard." Tom Hanks steps towards her and delivers a line that took my breath away. Not only did it fit the situation his character was in, it perfectly defines the job of Sales. In fact, it was so powerful that it sat at the bottom of my email signature. Hanks steels his eyes on hers, and grumbles, "It's supposed to be hard. If it wasn't hard everyone would do it. The Hard is what makes it great."

The "Hard" is what makes a great. Yup, that's sales. Ask successful salespeople their story and it won't take long before they start describing the endless pursuit of those initial customers, the self-doubt that they felt, the day after day struggle before something finally broke and they realized, "Holy cow. I really can do this job!"

If you are new to sales, if you are just starting out, if you are struggling, if you are a selling owner who doesn't know the first thing about sales, if you think that you are the only one who's going through what you are going through, take heart. Sales is hard. Wicked *hahd*, as we say here in Boston. But if it wasn't hard, everyone would do it. Someday, you can look back on your sales career and realize Tom Hanks was absolutely right: The hard is what made it great.

Are there any questions? Okay, hearing none, we can get to the purpose of this book: To share with you ***The 25 Sales Tips Ever!*** Let's go...



Sales Tip #1

# THE BEST SALES MOTTO EVER!

# #1: The Best Sales Motto Ever!

I started my sales career in June 1982 selling business forms (continuous computer-generated invoices, statements, checks, etc.) for a company called UARCO. It was a fortunate first sales job because the company provided its salespeople with extensive professional training, flying them to corporate headquarters in Barrington, Illinois, where they were put under the tutelage of the legendary Larry Dille.

Larry was five-and-a-half-feet of intelligence, personality, unparalleled sales knowledge, presence, and power. For me, he was a key teacher at a pivotal time in my life. The first lesson I learned in his class was UARCO's sales motto—the best sales motto ever! It was the guiding light for me then and it still is now. And it's the first Sales Tip:

## “Solve the Problem, Earn the Order”

“Solve the problem, earn the order” means that you should focus your attention—and your sales pitch—on the business need, not the purchase price. It's not your job to go out and find people who want to save money on the service or product you're selling. Your boss can buy a list or use an online marketing campaign to do that more efficiently and effectively. No, your job is to learn the story behind what they want to buy and find a way to come up with a solution or two.

## Qualifying Questions

In order to do this, you need to ask qualifying questions and find out what happens to the job from the moment it arrives in Receiving to the moment it is used or discarded. Everything! What problem is the client trying to solve? What is the desired outcome? What have you done in the past? What does ideal look like?

## Compare These Two Sales Calls

For example, let's say you are calling on Bill Farquharson, Sales Trainer.

You know that he gives a lot of presentations and uses a variety of printed materials at his events so they remember him when they get back to their office. You know he started The Sales Vault, a subscription-based resource for salespeople and selling owners in the graphic arts. With this information in hand, there are two different sales calls you could make:

### Call #1

If you focus on the product need—the printed products Bill uses—the call could go like this:



"Hi, Bill. My name is Allison and I sell print. I am confident that I can save you money on your print-spend and would appreciate being given the chance to provide you with some pricing."

As a customer, I'm thinking, "Great! Another moron for my growing bid list. My plan is to put my foot on everyone's head and press down. The last one alive wins."

To that customer, taking that sales approach is like saying, "I am a gallon of milk, just like every other gallon of milk."

Now, before you get all uppity and tell me that I am contributing to the race to the bottom that I continually preach against, consider this: You have done absolutely nothing for me except to say you have a low price. Lots of companies will give me a good price. Why should I buy from you? You want my business? Earn it. Solve the problem!

### **Call #1**

If you focus on the business need—getting people to remember Bill, learn about The Sales Vault, and buy from him down the road—the call could go like this:

"Hi, Bill. My name is Allison and I can help you be more sticky with your presentation attendees. I'd imagine you'd like to stay top-of-mind with these prospects. I can help you design compelling collateral that will attract new and repeat customers. I'd like to learn more about your company and the goals of this presentation. Let me put my expertise to work for you."

What's different about that second pitch? She started by thinking about what Bill's problem might be. What's keeping him up at night? "He's a sales trainer. I guess if I were a sales trainer, my problem would be that I'd want more people to train. Aha! I can help with that!"

After identifying the problem, she can focus on finding a solution and then selling that idea. Once she has convinced Bill that her solution would work, she will be able to make the sale at her price. Plus, she'll earn the loyalty of a client who is likely to bring her company in at the design stage of the next job, not the over-crowded quote stage.

Finding "the problem" comes with varying levels of difficulty. Sometimes it will be obvious and other times you will have to put in a great deal of work before you can confidently say that you have gotten to the core business need at hand.

# Here's a hint:

One business need that every company/organization shares is growth. That is, we all want more revenue. Other than Mergers & Acquisition, there are only three ways to grow:

1. Obtain new customers;
2. Sell more to existing customers;
3. Go into new markets which service a different kind of customer.

Finding “the problem,” then, requires an understanding (or even a guess) of how a company/organization is working to achieve one or more of those strategies. Get curious and come up with a list of open-ended questions designed to help you learn more about their business’ needs and goals. Fortunately, that information is typically all over their website. The skill involved in finding and interpreting that information is eight short Sales Tips away. Stay thirsty, my friend.

Sales Tip #2

# THE BEST TIME OF DAY TO CALL AND GET SOMEONE ON THE PHONE

# #2: The Best Time of Day to Call and Get Someone on the Phone

Without question, this is my favorite sales tip. Its originator is my older brother, Andy. I'll bet I was 21 when he gave me this advice, and it wouldn't surprise me if he's forgotten by now.

Sometimes—most times, these days—the hardest part of a sales call is just reaching the person. You can call 20 numbers and end up leaving 18 or 19 voicemails. Or 20. If only there was a way to know actually when was the best time of day to call and speak with someone.

When I ask, "What's the best time of day to call someone and get them on the phone?" during my seminars, I usually receive answers such as:

- "Before 8 a.m."
- "At lunchtime."
- "After 5 p.m."

The thinking is that a gatekeeper would not be around at these times, improving the odds of getting through to the decision-maker. Okay, I'll buy that thinking to a certain extent, but there is really a better time. Here's Andy's advice:

## The best time to reach someone on the phone is just before the top of the hour.

Think about it: When do all meetings start? At the top of the hour, right? So where is the client just before that? IN HIS OR HER OFFICE GETTING READY!!

Call someone 5-10 minutes before the top of the hour and you have an 85% better chance\* of getting someone on the phone!

This tip is an absolute gem. So simple, too. You have at least eight opportunities every day to apply it and see if it works for you. But wait, there's more...

## A Tip Twist

What if you don't want to get someone on the phone? What if your goal isn't to talk to that person, but you'd rather just leave a message? Why in the world would you want that outcome? Simple. Phone calls with existing clients can suck up a lot of time—especially long-time

customers you know well—and it's not always convenient to spend 20 minutes discussing sports or politics or the weather. You just want to leave a quick message like:

- "Your samples will be delivered to your office today," or
- "Just following up on the job I sent in last week to see how everything went."

Now that you know the best time to reach someone, you also know the best time not to call if you don't want to reach them. If your goal is just to leave a message, call the person just after the top of the hour—say, 9:05 a.m. or 2:10 p.m.

You: "Hi, this is Bill Farquharson. May I speak with Dudley?"

Them: "I'm sorry. Mr. Dooright is in a meeting. Would you like his voice mail?"

You: Perfect..."Yes!"

## Watch the Clock

This simple sales tip will save you time and help you connect with the people you want to talk to while intentionally missing the ones you don't. Every time I call my brother, the originator of the sales tip, I check to see what time it is to make certain that it's a few minutes before the top of the hour. It works on him, too.

When it works for you, you can thank Andy Farquharson, the best salesman in the world. Well, my world anyway.

*\*This is according to feedback from my clients...but then 76% of all statistics are made up on the spot (including that one).*

Sales Tip #3

# THE BEST TIME MANAGEMENT TIP EVER



# #3: The Best Time Management Tip Ever

Once upon a time there was a thing called, “The End of the Day.” This occurred around 5 p.m. or so every afternoon and it meant that work was over and personal time was about to begin. No one called you at home. Most business associates and coworkers did not have your home phone number. There were no emails to check or text messages to respond to. People simply stopped working and picked it all up the next day.

Hold on. Give me a minute to enjoy this peaceful memory.... Okay, I’m back.

Then came the Smart Phone and everything changed. Suddenly, we were all accessible after hours. In fact, it soon became expected that calls would be taken or messages returned after hours. And during weekends. And while on vacation.

This sales tip doesn’t change any of that—it can’t alter the expectations of others. It does, however, help squeeze the most selling time out of your day and then shut down when it is over so that you can give your family the greatest gift possible: Your complete presence.

It does require some planning, but it is the Best Time Management tip ever:

## Never leave today until you’ve planned tomorrow.

Make it the last thing you do before you walk out the door: List everything you want to get accomplished tomorrow:

- Your appointments
- Your To-Do’s (highlighting 3-5 top priorities)
- The people you need to call, and...

## Have a Plan, Stan

If you arrive for work the next day and you don’t know what you are going to do, you’re already behind. You should show up with a plan, ready to engage—a plan that you created the day before.

I do this 365 days a year. Mind you, I don’t like that I have to do this. I dearly miss the days when life was more relaxed and everyone wasn’t so busy. But I follow this tip so that I can maximize my sales productivity and, equally important, be able to let go and exhale when the workday is over. Otherwise, there is no end to work, my mind never shuts off, and my stress level has a tendency to orbit ceaselessly in the stratosphere.

Time management in general fascinates me. It’s a part of every conversation I have with a sales

rep or (especially) a Selling Owner. How is it that two reps can sit next to each other, sell to the same territories, be backed by the same equipment, and have dramatically different sales outcomes? Part of the answer is their use of time.

## My Daily Goal

I read an otherwise useless book once that said the number one rule of time management is this: You will never catch up. Once I accepted that, I no longer made it my goal to end each day with a cleared task list and a cleaned desk. Now, I strive to simply:

- Begin each day with a plan and a list of my top priorities,
- Make the most out of each day,
- Get back on track when I get interrupted,
- Complete everything I can, then
- End the day with a plan for tomorrow.

Do that consistently, I figure, and I will achieve the success that I seek.

## Time Is Not on Your Side

One important lesson I have learned over the years seems completely counter-intuitive: You will get more done if you have less time to work. Makes no sense, right? But let me give you an example: In October 2016, I had an 8 a.m. flight to London on a Thursday. Naturally, this made for a crazy week of work since I only had three days to get five days' worth of work done. But when I got on board at 7:30 a.m. that Thursday morning, I was astonished how much I had accomplished in just 72 hours. It got me thinking: How the heck did I do that?

That's when I realized that it was because I had so little time that I was able to get so much done. You see, I did not have the luxury of a full week. I had no time to waste so I had made (necessary) good choices as to what to do and what to skip, eliminating the time-sucking tasks that, while potentially fun, really did not belong on my To Do list in the first place! After all, the well-known Pareto Principle states that 20% of our tasks make up 80% of our profitable activities.

Are you picking up what I am putting down here? Eighty percent of the items on your To Do list will not make you any money. If you limit the amount of time you have to work—and concentrate the time you have on the most important tasks—you will get more done.

Naturally, just having a day planned does not guarantee a productive and efficient experience. There are those "Just Do It" moments when the rubber meets the road and you've got to tackle some of those pesky, unprofitable tasks.

It's particularly important to identify the top priorities you've got coming for the day ahead. Personally, I put arrows next to them on my notepad (yes, I have gone back to my non-digital world and create my task lists with pencil and paper). This way, I know to get to those items first.

Very often, I will hear people tell me that, once again, they don't get to many of the items on their To-Do list because a phone call or an interruption from a coworker distracts them and they never seem to get back on track. This is why you must identify the top two or three tasks to be completed and then get to them first thing in the morning. If the phone rings, don't be afraid to let it go to voicemail. You are not nearly as important as you think you are, and a few minutes' delay isn't going to kill anyone. In fact...

## Bonus Sales Tip (no extra charge):

If you want to carve out time in your morning so that you can get to these priorities, here's an idea for you. Change your outgoing voicemail message to something like, "Good morning! This is Bill Farquharson and today is Friday, October 20. I'm in the office today and will be returning phone calls after 9:30 a.m. If you need something prior to that time, please press zero and have me paged or ask for Madeline in our Customer Service department."

I promise you that 99.9% of the population will simply leave a message, figuring that it can easily wait until 9:30 a.m. My experience has been that the only people who simply cannot wait and demand to talk to you right away share your last name. After all, "You didn't mean me, right Dad?"

If you arrive in the morning and you do not have a plan, one that was created yesterday, you are already behind. Let today be the last time that that ever happens. It's no guarantee that you will have a productive day, but your odds are a lot better as a result.

## Your Turn

Any major changes I've made in my life started with a one-week trial. What I do is to make a plan, engage it on a Monday, and run it as is all the way through to the end of the week before making any changes. That way, I've got a little bit of a sample size to work from. Using this thinking...

Set an alarm on your cell phone to go off at, say, 5 PM every workday. This will be your indication to stop and set up a plan for the next day. Try this for a week and see what kind of a difference it makes in your work life to begin each sales day with a plan and in your personal life to be able to call it a day and shut down. Again, let the entire week go by before passing any judgment as the effect might not be apparent immediately.

After that week, go ahead and make any adjustments (such as changing the time that the alarm goes off) that you think are necessary.

Sales Tip #4

# THE SECOND- BEST TIME MANAGEMENT TIP EVER

## #4: The Second-Best Time Management Tip Ever!

If the best sales tip on time management is about the day ahead, then the second best tip on time management recommends that you start thinking a little farther down the road:

### Never leave this week without having next week planned.

Okay, so maybe “planned” is a bit of a stretch. After all, next week is still a fuzzy Polaroid, unclear and still developing (see what I did there?). Maybe it’s better to say, “have next week outlined.” The point is that you need to think 7 days ahead and prepare.

Every week has a theme. Think about the most recent week now past. Wasn’t there a common denominator? Could you describe it as focused on “Prospecting” or “Vacation-prep” or “Vacation-recovery” or “Crazy busy” or....whatever? The point is to think ahead, identify the trend, anticipate, and then prepare by grouping common activities. Here’s how:

Let’s say you get an appointment Tuesday of next week at a company an hour away from the office. Your next step should be to turn your prospecting guns towards that geographic area. Who else have you been targeting nearby? If you set up an 8:30 a.m. call with Prospect A, could you find someone nearby to meet with at 10 a.m.? By working hard to get a second appointment in that area, you have instantly doubled your sales productivity for that day.

### Diligence is Omnipotent

Unable to secure another firm appointment? Then your next choice will be to visit companies in the same area that you’ve been calling, but have not been able to reach. Leave each one a voice mail with the words, “I’ve got an appointment nearby and will stop by to see if I can at least meet you after having left all these messages.”

Another option is to visit existing clients. Here again, you want to give people a heads up that you’re stopping by, but visiting is just good old-fashioned customer service, especially if you bring doughnuts.

Way down on the bottom of the list of preferred actions, there is cold-calling (this is the only time I recommend the unannounced fly-by). Perhaps there are companies that you drive past that look interesting. Stop by with the intention of gathering information, not to make a sales call. If they can see you, great, but your approach here is, “I’m doing some research on your company prior to making a sales call and just wanted to see it and get a feel for your operations.” That takes the pressure off of you to potentially come across as “Sales-y and makes for a more relaxed conversation.

Finally, if you have something to do on the way there and back, you will have wrung every last drop of efficiency out of that day, all because you thought ahead and prepared for next week this week. Well done, you. What could you get done on the drive? I typically make what is called, “B-level” phone calls. These would be things like returning a client’s message or calling my plumber. Pretty much anything but prospecting. I am of the opinion that conversations with potential new customers should have a quiet background. Otherwise, the message you’re sending is, “You are not important enough for me to call from a quiet setting.”

## Thinking It Through

Reviewing those last few paragraphs and the amount of time that went into planning one day on the road, what started with one appointment has turned into a very efficient use of your time. All of this happened because you prepared. You thought ahead. Preparation is the most important part of time management. I love it when someone says to me, “You made that look easy” because I know how much work went into thinking things through ahead of time.

My time management goal is to see the day, week, and month ahead. I want to be aware of where I am in the sales cycle and the calendar year and then plan accordingly. I believe the year can be broken up into sections, each unique, and each focusing on a different set of priorities.

Here are some examples:

## The Holiday

If the Holidays are approaching and things are going to be quiet, I will start making a list of the tasks that Steven Covey would call “Neither important nor urgent,” so that when things slow down and prospecting as usual might not be nearly as effective, I can still sharpen the saw. During the time between Christmas and New Year’s, for instance, I might organize my prospecting list, find some big fish to call on, review old opportunities, improve my sales skills, learn more about my CRM, or just throttle back and relax. All are good choices to get ready for the crazy-busy times that are sure to return. This, too, is good time management and this, too, requires preparation.

## The “Summer Slowdown”

Everyone complains about the so-called summer slowdown. During the months of July and August in particular, business seems to take a break and everyone’s numbers suffer as a result. Salespeople blame vacations and an overall blasé attitude from clients for this, but truth be told, they themselves created it by what they didn’t do months earlier. If you want to do something to offset the summer slump, time management/preparation plays a key role. By ramping up your selling activity in April, May, and June—the second Three Most Important Selling Months of the Year (explained as part of tip #15)—and by making prospecting a priority (Theme of the Week),



the fruits of your labor will change your opinion about summer.

Looking well down the road as far as three-to-six months ahead, and then setting an agenda demonstrates superior time management skills. If you are trying to beat the summer slowdown, you'd best make a special commitment to prospecting during the late winter or spring.

Life got complicated when work started following us home like some creepy stalker. By building and keeping firm barriers and constantly, constantly, constantly looking ahead, we can maximize the time we have, lower our stress levels, and increase our sales.

Enough about time management for now, let's get back to work.

Sales Tip #5

# THE BEST WAY TO NEVER COLD CALL AGAIN!

# #5: The Best Way to Never Cold Call Again!

Prospecting is hard. Wicked hard. There's the endlessly repeated refrain of "No!" and the countless unreturned voice mail messages, not to mention the times of being hung up on or worse, ignored. Good times.

What if you could never cold call again? What if all of your new business opportunities came from within your existing and ever-growing network? No more phone calls. No more standing outside a new account like some kid on the sideline just waiting to get put in the game. Great concept, right? Here's how to make it happen:

## Never leave an existing account without meeting at least one new person.

Starting today, every time you walk into an existing account, make it a goal to walk out having met someone whose name you did not know previously. What does this accomplish? First, you build a wide base within that company. This opens up new opportunities while lowering your chances of losing the account in case a key contact moves on. The second advantage happens because that key contact moved on. Here, let me explain:

**Step 1:** You walk by a cubicle that you've passed a thousand times before on the way to see your customer. There is someone sitting inside, quietly doing his or her job. Applying this new sales tip, you stick your head in and introduce yourself. You chit-chat and make small talk. You ask a few questions, comment on the photographs on their desk, ask what they do, and exchange business cards. When you leave the cubicle, write down everything that is relevant about that conversation. Make certain that it gets into your CRM ASAP. Connect with the person on social media. Send a birthday and/or a holiday card.

**Step 2:** Each time you are at that account, make a point of saying hello to that person. If you're smart, you will have made a list of the people you've met this way and reviewed it prior to walking in the door. Here's the payoff...

**Step 3:** One day, you walk by that cubicle and it is empty. When you ask why, you learn that your new friend has taken a new job over at Company B, a huge company, one that buys a lot of what you sell and has been on your Top Ten Prospect List forever.

**Step 4:** Hello, Company B!

# New Accounts, Family Style

And that is how you go years without prospecting ever again. This is a simple tip that pays tremendous long-term dividends. How long? My record is 11 years. Yup, I made it 11 years without ever calling on an account that I did not know (aka, “cold calling”). Each of my new accounts came as the result of a referral from the inside, the easiest kind of sale there is.

And these were not just small accounts, by the way. One of them bought \$250,000 worth of sales training from me two years in a row. No-bid! High profit! The only downside was that I had to pay a lot of parking tickets because there was no place to park around that building in Cambridge, Mass.

The key to never cold calling again is to build your network, one new connection at a time. It’s great to use Social Media, but the best relationships are formed face-to-face. Make it your goal to know so many people at an account, that you are considered one of the family.

Sales Tip #6

# THE BEST VOICEMAIL TEMPLATE!

# #6: The Best Voicemail Template!

Voicemail, as everyone knows, was created by Satan just after he was done writing the U.S. Tax Code. When it was first invented, the idea was simple:

1. You would leave a message, and
2. Someone would return it.

Now, voicemail is no longer used to catch missed phone calls. Now it, along with caller ID, is used to screen unwanted callers and filter out evil sales-types like us. If it is your expectation that you will receive a call-back from your voicemail message, I admire your optimism and would like to talk to you about some wonderful investment opportunities. Or Amway.

But voicemail doesn't have to be thought of as a barrier. Today, voicemail has one primary purpose for salespeople: To serve as an audition.

As customers are reviewing their voicemail messages, they are sizing you up. They are listening to the tone, content, and quality of your words. If they like what they hear, they will either return the call or, far more likely, make note of your name and maybe, maybe, maybe even save the message for future use.

## Opportunity Ringing

Make no mistake about it: Voicemail is an opportunity far more often than it is a problem. There are sales trainers who will tell you not to bother. No one's going to return the call anyway, they'll tell you, so don't waste your breath. Well, as Wayne Gretzky's father told him, you will miss 100% of the shots you never take. So then why not see voicemail as an asset?

In order to make the most of this chance to impress by nailing the audition, one must follow this best voicemail template!

Start by breaking your voicemail down into three parts:

1. In the first third of the voicemail, state your name, company, and phone number (slowly and enunciated with purpose). Why put your phone number at the beginning of the message? Because in the event someone actually does save it with the intent of calling you back, you do not want to force them to listen to the entire message all over again just to get your number. Maybe one in 250 will actually call you, but that is one more than you had prior to reading this sales tip!

Next, remind the customer who you are. I always assume that they are sitting there thinking, "Who the heck is Bill Farquharson?" So, to help them out, I connect the dots with something like, "We met at a trade show," or "We have a mutual friend," or "I'm following up on the letter I sent you," or whatever the connection may be.



2. In the second third of the voicemail, state the purpose of your call. This is the “meat” of your message and it comes from the research that you have done on the company prior to picking up the phone (something we’ll get back to later).
3. In the last third of the voicemail, repeat your name, company, and phone number, and then predict what will happen next. That is, set the customer’s expectations with something like, “Today is Tuesday. I will call you again before the week is out.”

## Can You Hear Me Now?

And that’s it. That is the perfect voicemail template. Keep it short and impactful. Will your call be returned as a result of this perfectly balanced and well-spoken message? NO! We already covered this. Weren’t you listening?

What it will do is help you display your professionalism and confidence and leave a positive impact in the mind of your prospect so that when you make subsequent calls and they look over to see your phone number on their caller ID, you will stick out from the pack and you stand a better chance of earning that one word that we all want to hear: “Hello?”

One last note on the subject: If you can’t finish the sentence that starts, “the purpose of my call is...” and talk about something other than your products and services, don’t bother calling.

Sales Tip #7

# THE BEST WAY TO GET NOTICED

# #7: The Best Way to Get Noticed!

I love being different. In height (6'6") and personality and approach, I take great pride in doing the things that others aren't doing. When everyone else goes left, I go right. I've always been that way I hope that never changes.

When it comes to prospecting, I follow a different path than others as well. If everyone else is using email, that leaves the mailbox open for me to do something special, something that is sure to get the attention of my intended target. It's simple and Old School and it's Tip #7:

## Use the Mail to Get Attention!

The mail?!? We talking about the United States Postal Service? Geesch, Bill, haven't you heard about newer and better ways to communicate with someone, you know, electronically?

Actually, I have. And so has everyone else. And that's what everyone else does. And that's why I'm going to do something different! While my competition is busy filling up Inboxes, they've left mailboxes empty for me to send attention-getting solicitations.

## Apply Here

There are two main ways to apply this sales tip. First, postcards. Postcards have a 100% readership. We pick them up, flip them over, and either save them, act on them, or toss them.

But the point is, THEY GET READ!

As an added bonus, using a handwritten postcard as a part of your prospecting process differentiates you from your competition, which is nice (and the point of being different).

Try out the effectiveness of this tip by inserting it into your prospecting process. The card itself doesn't have to be anything special. You can create something with your company logo on it and return address. Or, you can just use a blank piece of card stock or even something with a beach scene or even one with some puppies or kittens. It really doesn't matter much.

As a time-saving tip, prepare these postcards ahead of time by carrying a bunch of them with you and then use the time waiting in a customer's lobby to write out something like, "I've been trying to get you on the phone but have not had any luck. Hopefully, next time I call you will pick up!" Be sure to use a pen that is the same brand and color as one you use in the office so that later, when you finish the postcard with the client's name, your return address, and signature, it will look as though you did it in one sitting.

One of my clients got creative with this suggestion. He told me that he sent out Three Stooges postcards to all his male prospects, correctly figuring that it would stand out and be remembered so that when he called to follow up and referenced the postcard, he increased his chances of getting an appointment. He told me later, "Whenever I did get an appointment from one of those prospects, I walked into his office and saw my postcard stuck on his wall. No guy ever threw it out!"

## Getting to Know Me

The second way to apply this tip is with the *introductory letter*. As we will discuss later, you get only one chance to make a first impression, so why not do something that could potentially knock it out of the park!

A professionally written, typed, and mailed business letter is such a rarity these days that it instantly separates you from the crowd. While letters were once commonplace, I'd bet 99% of the business community has no idea how to properly format such a thing now.

Imagine receiving a crisp, white, #10 envelope with your name on the first line, title on the second, and remaining contact information below it. In the upper right-hand corner, 1/8 of an inch from the top and from the right margins is a first-class stamp. Such a sight immediately says, "Professional!" Match that up with a well-crafted message (something I will cover in Tip #23) and you are off to the races.

And speaking of ideas for differentiating yourself, take a look at Tip #8.

Sales Tip #8

# THE BEST WAY TO DIFFERENTIATE YOURSELF WHEN PROSPECTING!

# #8: The Best Way to Differentiate Yourself When Prospecting!

Whenever someone “graduates” from one of my training programs, having demonstrated their success and increased numbers, I always ask them to tell me one thing that they would advise a young sales rep to do. One hundred percent of the time the answer comes back in some form of “Make the calls, make the calls, make the calls.” Diligence is omnipotent. And it has another key benefit.

I routinely ask company owners and presidents in my live audiences, “When an outside sales person calls on you, what percentage of the time does he or she leave one voicemail message and never call again?” I’ve put that query out there for 20 years and the answer always comes back: 90% or higher.

Think about that.

Nine out of ten times your competition (or you!) makes one phone call, leaves one voicemail message, and never calls again. And I understand why, to be honest. Most salespeople only prospect when they are desperate for business. I put the number of reps who consistently seek new business at less than 5%, with the key word in that sentence being “consistently.” Others tell themselves lies such as, “I don’t have time. My existing accounts are more important they’re taking up my entire day.”

Remember, there is a sales rep out there who has the same equipment you have, is selling in the territory similar to yours, and is not telling himself lies. And is kicking your butt as a result!

Imagine being on the receiving end of all of those one-off phone calls. If you knew that 90% of the reps who called you will never call again, you would let everything go to voicemail, and immediately forget all about him or her. So, one quick idea for differentiating yourself as a sales rep is:

## Call Twice!

If you call on a prospect and leave a voicemail message, and then call back the next day, you have done something that 90% of your competition fails to do. By today’s sales standards, you are almost stalking! Your persistency will pay off and you will be rewarded for using this key differentiator.

But let’s go completely off the rails. Let’s go nuts and make three calls and leave three voicemail messages. Now you are really in rare air and you can say something that points that out, something such as, “I’d bet 90% of the people who call you leave one voicemail message and never call you back. This is my third voicemail message. This is how hard I would work for your business. Can you imagine how hard I would work for you when you become a customer?”



Now this is a confident message, and is it borderline cockiness? Absolutely! But you know what? That company isn't doing business with you right now, so let's say that you just got too aggressive for the prospect's taste. What's the worst that can happen? The company still won't do business with you. It's like going to Vegas and then coming home with the same amount of money. You broke even. You didn't lose anything. You won!

## The Diligent Are Winners

It's worth repeating: Diligence is omnipotent. Your competition prospects like a bird eats: a little peck here and a little peck there. They snack, fly away, and then come back later to look for more...maybe. Meanwhile, you stick with it while the others leave and your persistency will bring you success.

The most important characteristic a sales rep can have is diligence. Even if you are born with no natural sales ability whatsoever, you can out-hustle other sales reps, willing yourself to prominence and wealth.

Hustle. Drive. Passion. Diligence. Persistency. Call it what you will, but it all translates into the same result: Success! By making that second, then third, then maybe even fourth sales call, you're separating yourself from the competition in a "Verizon" kind of way: Can you hear me now? Can you hear me now? Can you hear me now?

Sales Tip #9

**THE BEST WAY  
TO GET AN  
APPOINTMENT,  
LEAVE A KICK-  
ASS VOICEMAIL  
MESSAGE, AND  
HAVE INFECTIOUS  
CONFIDENCE!**

# #9: The Best Way to Get an Appointment, Leave a Kick-Ass Voicemail Message, and Have Infectious Confidence!

A few pages ago, you heard me tell you that the single most important characteristic a sales rep could have is Diligence. Diligence rules. Diligence is omnipotent. There is no such thing as a diligent failure, blah, blah, blah. Well, the single most important skill that a sales rep could have and the single most important lesson that I can teach you or anyone else is summarized in Tip #9:

## Make a High-Value, Well-Researched Sales Call

This tip, this skill, is at the epicenter of the sales call. It drives everything. It's that important.

Let's say you want to make a sales call on a bank. Thinking "traditionally," you ask yourself, "Who is the right person for me to call on?" Immediately, the answer comes back, Purchasing. After all, what else could it be? So you begin the arduous process of trying to land an appointment and get in line with all the other blood-sucking lemming sales people who are willing to undercut each other in a pricing race to the bottom which only benefits the customer.

But what if you thought differently? What if, instead of asking, "Who is the right person for me to call on?" you started with, "What should I talk to this company about?" In other words, what if you determined the "What"—the substance of an effective message—before looking for the "Who"? Yup, that's what I said: The What before the Who! Suddenly, "Whom should I be calling on?" becomes, "What should I be talking about?"

This one's going to need some 'splainin', Lucy.

## Give It Up For The Who

Have you ever heard yourself say, "It's all about price these days"? If you are of the belief that people are interested only in buying from the cheapest vendor, then you might be surprised to know that most of the time you, yourself, are to blame for losing the sale. Yes, YOU!

Whenever I am in a coaching situation and I hear someone make that statement, I like to do a little forensic investigation, playing back the typical encounter line by line. Let's say we are still calling on that bank:

Sales rep: "I'd like to speak to the person who handles your purchasing."

Buyer: "That would be me. How can I help you?"

Sales rep: "I sell <<your product/service here>>. I can save you money. Do you have

anything that I can quote on?"

Buyer: "Here. Give me a price on 5000 \_\_\_\_\_."

<<insert musical time interlude here>>

Sales rep: "Here's my price."

Buyer: "Sorry. Your price is too high. Goodbye."

Is the buyer really to blame here? Absolutely not! He was doing his job and getting the best price on what he perceives to be a commodity: your products/services. It's the sales rep who led that Buyer down the dark alley late at night. Is there any surprise that he got mugged?

Let's try a different approach...

## What's The What?

At the beginning of your prospecting process, you check out the bank's website. Right there on the front page, you see that the bank has a promotion running: "Now you can refinance your car with us at only 2.99% APR." You, my friend, have found The What. You have uncovered a business need: They are trying to get new customers to the bank and convince existing customers to move their car loan over to them.

Next, you think to yourself, "Who is the right person for me to call on? Who is in charge of that promotion?" A few clicks on the loan promotion provides the name of a person who can give more information on this opportunity (or perhaps you walk into a local branch and simply ask). That's a good place to start! Now your sales call will sound completely different:

Sales rep: "I see that you've got a promotion on, effectively trying to get greater share of customer as well as to pull in some new business by getting people to refinance their automobile at a lower rate. I'd like to talk to you about how I can help you with this promotion."

See the difference? Now, instead of being in a conversation regarding specifications and price, you are in one that has to do with ideas and solutions that will help the bank make this promotion a success.

But hold up a second, Bill, you think. I've never been in charge of a bank promotion. How can I go in and claim that I can help if I don't have the answers? Easy there, Sparky. Don't worry. You don't need to know the answers. You just need to know the questions to ask, such as:

- Who is the target market for this promotion?
- How do people typically find out about it?
- What is your differentiator?
- What is the status and accuracy of your database?
- What have you tried in the past?

- What worked and what hasn't worked?

It's the answers to these open-ended questions that will help you determine which of your products and services is the best solution. Your job is to continue asking questions until the answers emerge. One thing I learned a long time ago is that if something doesn't make sense, I have not asked enough questions, asked the right questions, or asked the right person.

But let's back up for a second: Even if your "Who does your buying?" prospecting efforts on Purchasing do result in an appointment, under what circumstances will they buy from you? Well, if you are lucky, the existing vendor recently drop-kicked the most recent order and you walked in at the exact right time, resulting in the Buyer excitedly shouting out, "Good news, everyone: A new vendor has arrived to rescue us. Gather your things! We're saved!"

Ummm...no. That's not going to happen. So that we can learn the correct approach, let's grab Mr. Peabody and Sherman and step into the WABAC machine (younger than 50? Google it):

I started in sales in 1982, many years before Al Gore single-handedly invented the internet (true fact. I read it on the internet). I recall going to the library and sitting in the business section to read up on local companies. Anything that was 18 months old or newer was considered current. Today, we reach into our pocket and pull out a handheld, multipurpose device, talk into it, and get information that is close to real-time and far more accurate.

## Take Control

Understanding how to look at a company's website and/or look them up on Google to learn more about their business needs, direction, pain points, etc., has a far-reaching effect on the nature of the call—and its outcome:

- You will be more enthusiastic because you know you have something important to say. This manifests itself as melting away any fear you might have.
- The value of your voicemail messages increases dramatically.
- You are beginning the sales process higher up in the food chain, no longer calling at the Quote Stage of the job, but rather at the Idea Stage. It's here that you can design something to your own specifications and equipment and eliminate the "price" objection by controlling the entire process.
- You are differentiating yourself from the, "Do you have anything I can quote on?" crowd.

The net result: You will make more and better sales calls to more and better customers. Your sales call will have moved up from transactional vendor to strategic partner.

Do you remember Sales Tip # 1? Let me save you the potential for paper cuts while you flip back a few pages and remind you. It was about resisting the urge to "sell stuff." You know, "Solve the

Problem, Earn the Order,” and all that? Learning the critical skill of client research gets you there. Back when I started in sales, it was optional to sell with this approach. Now, it’s mandatory.

Dog-ear this page. Bend back the corner and make certain that you refer to this Tip when you hit that, “Why aren’t I selling more?” pothole. Mastering this skill will propel you into the sales stratosphere.

Now, instead of looking at a company and wondering what you sell that they could buy, you will look at the company and do some Dale Carnegie-style thinking as stated in the single most important and valuable book on sales ever written, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (another recommendation for you!). Without ever mentioning sales, this book summarizes everything you need to know in order to sell your products/services successfully and profitably:

## You can get what you want when you figure out what the other guy wants and help him to get it.

That’s sales, summarized in one sentence. Find out what the customer wants, what he really, really wants, and you can get what you really, really want: More sales and loyal customers.

## What Do They Want?

While each company’s website will reveal the specifics, in general all customers want one thing: Increased revenue. To repeat material covered in Tip #1, there are four ways to make this happen:

1. Mergers and Acquisitions— you can go ahead and throw this one out since it’s not something most salespeople can help with;
2. Business from new customers;
3. More business from existing customers;
4. New business from new markets that serve different customers.

To summarize this point so we can move on: Do research at the start of your prospecting process that identifies how a particular prospect is seeking to achieve those last three revenue growth options and then find the person who is in charge of that venture.

The final step is to ask some version of those open-ended questions that I listed earlier. These will help you to learn more about what the prospect is trying to do. Create a list of those questions and then constantly add to that list as you learn more.

Gang, this skill is a lot like a muscle group. Applying it will make it stronger over time until it

becomes second nature. You will look at many situations and opportunities you come across with new eyes, suddenly noticing those bank promotions, seeing those empty seats (and therefore lost revenue) at that evening class you're taking, finding opportunities within the business articles you read. And you will become what I call "sales curious."

Your muscles will grow in this area and you will become ripped. Over time, you will build the kind of brand that the 90-pound weakling salespeople will envy. You will get phone calls from customers who say, "We are participating in a trade show in a couple of months and would like to discuss ways that you could help us make it a success."

Now you can see why this is the single most important skill for sales rep to have.



Sales Tip #10

# THE BEST WAY TO HAVE A GREAT SALES APPOINTMENT!

# #10: The Best Way to Have a Great Sales Appointment!

It finally happened!

You worked and worked and worked. Phone call after phone call after postcard after drop-by after phone call after phone call...and it has now paid off: You've got your first appointment with a new potential customer! Congratulations! Woo-hoo! Let the pigeons loose! But...

Now what?

Back in the day, appointments were a lot more frequent and easier to come by. Buyers even had open office hours that reminded me of college professors. The non-incumbent vendor could sign up for a time slot and spend 15 minutes introducing him/herself and the company. It always made sense to me and I never understood why companies don't do that now. After all, you don't know what you don't know and there might be a better solution out there and you'll never find it if you never look. But I digress....

Today, appointments are few and far between as everyone has gotten busier and, thanks to the "Amazonization" of everything (online researching, ordering, order-checking, etc.), there is less of a need to see someone face-to-face. This sales tip has to do with making the most of that rare appointment opportunity and it comes down to two words:

## Preparation & Execution

First, let's prepare for the call. Before you walk in the door, there are three things that you need to research:

1. The company: Double down on the research you have already done. You'll want to know everything from the company's history and background to its selling/buying philosophy. Get to know the players. Get a feel for their attitude towards marketing. It's all right there on their website. Read between the lines. Remember: The website is the window to the soul of the company.
2. The industry. Does the company belong to a trade association? Call the association, tell them that as part of your preparation to call on one of their members, you are researching their industry and ask for their help. Ask about current trends and threats. Oh, and Google the following: "10 marketing mistakes that <<industry>> makes." I promise you, there are 100,000 blogs on that subject and it will give you some great background information and points you can bring up later in conversation.
3. The individual. Look up his or her profile on LinkedIn. Read any articles or blogs that have been written by or about the person. With stalker-like precision, get to know the people you are going to talk to and take note of any special awards or commonalities you may share.

# Think It Through

Next, you want to think through the sales call. What is it you want to accomplish with this call? What do you want to learn? Where do you want to be when it's over? And then, pay special attention to this bonus sales tip:

## The Goal of the First Appointment Is to Get a Second Appointment

I can't tell you how often I hear the story of an initial meeting that could not have gone better but the connection now appears to be dead. The customer was receptive and enthusiastic and the sales rep felt certain that good things were coming and then...nothing. Dead air and darkness. Unanswered phones and unreturned voicemail messages. Nothing. Not even the courtesy of a "So sorry. Big project came up and we got busy. We'll be in touch" email. Nothing but static.

Do not let this happen! Do not leave the room without an agreed-upon plan to return! Regardless of what you are told, something else will take priority and you will be kicked to the curb. There's nothing mean intended, it's just that you were the shiny object and now it's something/one else's turn.

I will even tell you that it's okay to say, "My goal today is to leave with an appointment to return. That would mean that I have said something that you are interested in and you have said something that I am interested in."

## Ducks in a Row

Put together an agenda for the call, even going so far as to share it with your customer in advance if the organization operates with that level of formality. It's not that the call is going to go in exact agenda order, but at least you have a structure for what the meeting should cover. Even if it's a rough draft, that's fine. Just don't go in without some kind of game plan. You worked too hard to get here to blow your chance.

Another bonus sales tip for you:

# Confirm All Appointments That Are More Than One Week Out

It is your responsibility as the sales rep to make certain that the day, date, time, and place of the appointment have been confirmed. Do not expect the prospect to remember it and do not make any assumptions. You are tempting fate. (Remember, the appointment likely does not have anywhere near the same level of importance to the prospect as it does to you.)

Also, if you are bringing someone with you, make certain that they know their role. If it's your boss, be very specific as to what you want him or her to do and do not let them take over the call. This is your appointment with your customer. Stay in control of the situation.

Okay, you are ready and your prep work is done. Let's begin the call...

## Execution

You arrive early, fully prepared to knock it out of the park.

Wait. Let me emphasize something: You arrive EARLY. There is virtually no excuse for you to be late for this sales appointment. I don't care what you do to try and correct it, you will never recover if you show up after the agreed-upon time. Being late sends a powerful message to the potential customer, and so does being on time.

The appointment begins: The first thing you need to do is **confirm the amount of time that has been set aside for this appointment.**

Sure, the client might have said, "I can give you 30 minutes, Bill. No problem!" But that was then and this is now, and something else may have come up that you won't find out about until the client says, "I need to go jump into another meeting" and you've blown five minutes or so shooting the breeze and building rapport, only to find out that it was one-third of the time he had to see you. Don't forget this important step.

Next, **review your agenda**, saying something like, "When we spoke on the phone, you told me that you are interested in learning more about our online ordering capabilities. Was there something else that you wanted to discuss?" What this does is to open up the possibility for, "Yes, actually. I got a request just this morning for wide format. Do you guys do that?" Had you not asked the question, that order could have gone to someone else.

As you speak, **pay close attention to body language**. You are looking for anything from closing eyes to signs of impatience or a facial expression change that indicates interest or lack thereof in the subject you are speaking on at the moment. Based on what you see, move on to a different topic or delve deeper into the one you're discussing.

Also, remember to **pull the customer** in so that you are not just a talking head. That is, ask questions to which you know the answer or validate a point with them so they stay engaged. You want to get their help in leading the way to your solution. In my live presentations, I do a card trick that demonstrates this. If you ever see it, try and figure out how it's done. And if you do, don't tell anyone. It's the only trick I know.

## Stay Loose

It's important not to be rigid in the direction of the call. That is, **be flexible**. If you want to talk about one thing but the client is clearly interested in something else, go down that road. You do not need to make your points in order. If the client shows interest in something, investigate. There might be an order at the end of that rainbow. And never forget the ABCs of closing: Always Be Closing. Look for any and all opportunities to make a sale. If the client gives you an indication that she is ready to buy, let her!

**At the end of the meeting, summarize.** What will you do next? What will the customer do? And most importantly: When and how will you meet again? Ideally, you will walk out of the room with an order. But that is not likely. It's more probable that this is the first step in a long walk.

When you get back to your car, write down everything you can remember about what happened during that meeting. What questions did you ask? How did the customer answer? What did she ask? What did she seem interested in? Also note anything of a personal nature that you should remember (birthdays, for example). Later, put this all into your CRM. It's the little things that end up making a difference in ways you can't possibly imagine.

The final piece to the call is to **write some sort of thank you note** as a follow up. Tell the client that you appreciate the time she took and then summarize the next steps. This is a classy and unexpected gesture that will not go unnoticed to the right kind of account.

Sales Tip #11

**THE BEST WAY  
TO ANSWER  
THE QUESTION,  
“IS THAT YOUR  
BEST PRICE?”  
WITH A “YES!”**



# #11: The Best Way to Answer the Question, “Is That Your Best Price?” with a “YES!”

Some years ago, I participated in a sales training class where the guy leading us divided the group into pairs—“You are a one. You are a two. You are a one. You are a two.” And so on).

The “ones” were to be the salespeople. They were sent into the hallway to await instruction. I was a “two,” a Buyer. We buyers stayed in the room and the Instructor said to us, “The salespeople are going to come in and they are going to present their price. You are to ask them one question and one question only: ‘Is that your best price?’ If they answer, ‘Yes,’ give them the order and raise your hand. If they answer anything other than that, you can cheat, steal, lie, do whatever you want to get the price down as low as possible.”

I will never forget what happened next. When the salespeople came back in I was paired with a good friend of mine, Mark Walter. We shook hands, made small talk, and he eventually got around to giving me his price. I asked the question, “Is that your best price?” Mark, along with 80% of the salespeople in that exercise, said, “No. I can do better”

All he had to do was to say, “Yes” and he would have gotten the order!

Let me make something very clear on this point: By the time you give the customer a price, it’s game over, and the only thing you can do is cut your cost. Therefore, the best way to answer the question, “Is that your best price?” with a “yes,” is to follow Sales Tip #11:

## Find Out Everything You Need to Know Before Giving Someone Your Price

Fact: Your price is going to be challenged just as sure as McDonald’s sells hamburgers. But if you have done your job, you will be prepared for this moment and confident in your answer to the question. Let me give you an example from my own sales career:

## The Right Questions

In 2012, I was contacted by the General Manager of a big Internet printer who wanted to meet with me and talk about what I could do for his inside sales team. When we got together, part of the conversation included a question from me to the owner that was some version of, “What are you hoping for? That is, what does ‘ideal’ look like to you?” Part of the answer came back, “We want to grow our sales by \$11 million. We feel that we have the plant capacity and that this number is reachable within a few years.”

Duly noted.



Returning home and whipping out my Ouija board, I calculated a price for training 20+ salespeople over a three month period on a weekly basis with access to my online training material: \$28,000. I wrote out a proposal and sent it over. Later that day, I called to follow up, and my client said, "\$28,000? That doubles our budget! We might consider something around \$14,000 but your figure is out of the question. Is that your best price?"

I could have done and said a lot of different things after hearing that, but because I had asked a lot of questions, and one in particular, here's what I said: "Let's suppose we come to an agreement and you end up hiring me. Before we begin, we set up some goals for sales growth, but I fall short of meeting those goals by 90%. Would you be angry?" (He said yes). "Would you want your money back?" (He laughed and said yes).

But then came my big question: I said, "Do you really think that I will fail to reach those goals by 90%?" (Absolutely not, he said emphatically). "Me, neither," I said, "but for the sake of argument, let's say that I did. You said you want to raise your sales by \$11 million. If I fail by 90%—something you are absolutely convinced will not happen—and I only raise your sales by \$1.1 million, are you telling me that that's not worth \$28,000 to you?"

Silence. And then, after what seemed like an eternity, he said, "Okay. You're hired."

One more thing: Before we hung up, I made him a promise. I promised that someday I would be angry that I didn't charge more. He laughed, but I said, "I'm serious."

They ended up renewing that contract several times and, as is typical, my work changed and morphed, but I ended up working with his various salespeople for about two-and-a-half years. Roughly 12 months after we stopped, I met the owner at a trade show in Las Vegas and he told me that his company sales were up \$4.8 million since they started working with me.

My response is a word that I can't print. He looked at me curiously and I said, "I didn't charge you enough!"

True story.

Okay, here's the point: I got that order because I was prepared for the question, "Is that your best price?" I didn't have to start backtracking on price because I was armed with information that justified my price. Will that strategy work 100% of the time? Absolutely not. But in this case I knew what was coming and I had prepared for it by learning more than just the specs of the job. I learned what it would mean to them if the training were successful.

# Zero Dark Customer

It is not uncommon for the client to go dark after the price is delivered, so in addition to being ready for the “Best price?” inquiry, you need to be prepared for the darkness. When clients disappear—and believe me, they will—you are left wondering what’s going on and gnashing your teeth in the biblical kind of way that never made sense to me. A million questions will enter your mind and you have lost your opportunity to ask them:

- Who is making the final decision?
- When is it being made?
- When do you want to hear from me as a follow-up?
- What is your preferred communication method? Office phone? Cell phone? Email?
- And perhaps most importantly, What happens if I can’t reach you? What should I do?

A little later on, I’ll give you some ideas for beating the, “your price is too high” objection. That’s a different conversation, but one with the same basic message: Be prepared!

Sales Tip #12

# THE BEST SALES PHILOSOPHY EVER!

# #12: The Best Sales Philosophy Ever!

Allow me to relate another personal story. It's the only way I can honestly tell you something that will let you see sales in an entirely new way and boost your self-confidence immeasurably.

When I was in my mid-20s, I did business with a large graphic design firm north of Boston that was run by a dynamic man named John Bell. One day, John invited me to come to hear a speaker who was promoting his book (he was a then-unknown but now-famous man named Mark Hopkins).

John had purchased an entire table and had also invited customers and employees. That night, we mingled for a while before someone called the meeting to order and we all headed for John's table. As I walked towards a chair, I noticed that John had invited more people than there were seats. Since I was just a vendor and the others were customers and employees, I walked to the back row against the wall and sat down, perfectly content to listen from there.

John walked over, stood in front of me, and said, "What are you doing back here? You are my honored guest." I replied, "John, I'm just a vendor to your company. Let your customers and employees sit there."

John Bell was probably 5'6" and I was a solid foot taller, but he grabbed my shoulder, pulled me up out of the chair, and looked me straight in the eye, delivering a line that I will never forget, one that spells out exactly the approach that needs to be taken in order to be successful in sales: "Let me tell you something young man," he said,

## "A Good Vendor is as Important as a Good Customer"

Amen to that, Brother John! If you sell with that kind of attitude—that you are the best in the business and the customer/prospect is crazy if he doesn't do business with you—your confidence will permeate through your words and a Jack Nicholson-style, "You want me on that wall, you need me on that wall," message will be delivered.

"Please do business with me" becomes "Here's why you want to do business with me" and confidence/assertiveness (there's that word again) becomes part of your differentiator.

I remember how awestruck I was when John spoke those words. I immediately wrote them down and then reprinted my business cards, adding them to the bottom so that people would read them and ask me what that meant. That was a conversation that I wanted to get into with someone!

# Setting the Bar High

I like the thought of selling with attitude, even if your confidence borderlines cockiness. I would much rather have that level of assertiveness than one that is laid-back and passive. Now everyone has his or her market or industry and that's not to say that the quiet, mild-mannered salesperson can't succeed, but I want my prospects to know that I choose them every bit as much as they choose me.

The bar for doing business with me is not at knee level. I'm not begging someone for work. I'm not asking for something to quote on. I set my bar way up over my head and I want my customers to recognize the fact that I work my heart out for them and that, quite frankly, they are lucky to have that kind of commitment from a vendor (although that's the cocky part that I will only think and never say). I put a great deal of passion into what I do. I am a good vendor and I am every bit as important as a good customer. You should be, and can be, too.

In September 2013, I wrote a Printing Impressions magazine column from the perspective of a sales rep who makes a prospecting call only to have the phone slammed down in response. It was called, "Thank You for Hanging up on Me." The net-net message is that it's okay to sell like you are all that and a bag of chips, provided, of course, that you are all that and a bag of chips. It's a fun read. Check it out.

Sales Tip #13

# THE BEST WAY TO INCREASE YOUR SALES VOLUME!

# #13: The Best Way to Increase Your Sales Volume!

This one is quick and easy:

## Increase, Improve, and Monitor Your Sales Activity

A life in sales is a constant roller coaster of high highs and lower lows. More than once, a sales rep hits bottom. Myself included. Fear, anxiety, and even sheer terror take over as days of sales doldrums become weeks and then turn into months. And when I say, “more than once,” I mean more than once a year. Heck, I’ve been in sales since 1982 and I still hit this same pothole, only to watch it become a crater (in my mind, anyway).

Self-doubt, like success, is a self-fulfilling prophecy. It is entirely possible to “think” your way into a losing streak. How? By selling from a point of fear. Trust me, every emotion that you are feeling is in your voice. I’m a sales coach and I can hear it from hundreds of miles away. Suppose it’s your birthday and you are looking forward to a party later that day that will be full of friends and family. There is happiness and joy and anticipation in your voice.

And your customers/prospects will hear that.

But if you are feeling low and worried, you are selling from a point of fear. Imagine if your boss said to you, “you’d better sell something by the end of the day or I’m going to fire you!” You’d spend the rest of the day terrified.

And your customers/prospects would hear that, too.

## Dragging an Anchor

I was once on a coaching call with a sales rep in Montana. It was a Wednesday and I instantly noticed something in his voice. I asked if he was okay and he assured me that he was. We resumed the call and within 30 seconds I heard it again. I couldn’t put my finger on it, but my Spidey senses told me that he was dragging an anchor around. I stopped the call again and pressed him until he finally admitted: “My girlfriend broke up with me last Saturday.” Last Saturday? He’s been carrying around the weight of that bad news for days and it has infiltrated his job!

Listen, the low lows are going to happen. In fact, everything that happens to you in sales is going to happen again and you need strategy for each situation. This Tip is about helping you sell your way out of the hole that you are in.



You can only control you—your actions, your activities, and your emotions. By controlling what you can control and focusing on two key points, you can turn this around.

1. First, increase, improve, and monitor your sales activity. You have to believe that if you do X, Y will happen. Doing X means following the four keys to sales success (Forgotten them? You'll find them on page XX.) Y represents the desired outcome. Focus on today, and when today is over, focus on tomorrow.
2. Second, make it your goal to end every day by saying, "I did my job today." Note that carefully-worded sentence. I didn't say, "I sold something today." That is a result. "I did my job" is an activity.

Focus on the lessons from the third sales tip, the one about time management. Start the day with a plan, identify your priorities, run the plan, end the day with a plan for tomorrow. Concentrate on the activity.

And that's it. By stringing together a series of activity-focused, "I did my job today" days, success will follow. Remember, I made you only one guarantee, that if you make a high value, well researched sales call to the right target market applying a prospecting process with diligence and pleasant persistency, your sales will grow. And they will. This advice will serve you during those times when your self-doubt goes from days to weeks to months.

Sales Tip #14

# THE BEST WAY TO INCREASE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY!

# #14: The Best Way to Increase Your Productivity!

We've now gone 11 sales tips since last talking about time management. It is such a big and important subject—one that comes up in every single one-on-one coaching call I do—that I wanted to use another of my 25 tips to give you an idea for improving yours. So, let's talk about how time management impacts productivity.

Like you, I know lots of busy people, but I can't think of too many of them that I would describe as productive. There's a definite difference between being busy and being productive. I used to confuse the two until once, completely by accident and through a little trial and error, I discovered the value of Tip #14:

## Set Three Alarms on Your Cell Phone

This particular tip is especially valuable for those of us who work from home. The misnomer about working from home is that we sit around all day watching reruns of "Leave It to Beaver" and eating bonbons. Anyone with even a shred of self-discipline will tell you that they work harder when they do it from home.

I was no exception. I found that I was waking up, grabbing a cup of coffee, and heading right to my office to get some work done. A few hours later, I would look down and realize that I was still in my pajamas. I failed to create separation between my business and personal life, a wall that had already been knocked down by those nasty little smart phones that we all carry around.

## Wherever We Go

Do you remember that long-lost thing called "the end of the day" that existed before cell phones? We would push back from our desk, go home, and mow our lawn before dark. Now, because work follows us wherever we go and we always feel the need to be on duty, it is much harder to shut down at the end of the day. But boundaries must be created and respected if we are to reclaim our personal lives and still be productive at work.

I went on a journey to figure out how to do this in my own life and came across a shocking discovery. Here, let me spare you the suspense: You will get more done by limiting the number of hours you work. It all began when I sent three alarms on my cell phone.

## Here's the way it works:

**Alarm #1: Wake up.** I typically wake up with the sun during the summer and then use those Hue programmable bulbs (a way of replicating the sunrise during those dark winter mornings) to come up slowly at around 5:30am. You can choose whatever time you want, obviously, but this works for me year-round.

**Alarm #2: Start work.** The second alarm goes off at 7:30 a.m. Now, the rule is that between the first and second alarms, I can do whatever I want, but I cannot work. I will make a good breakfast, shower and exercise, maybe read the paper, etc. Anything but work. (This is fairly easy to accomplish despite the fact that I love what I do and can't wait to get to it every day.)

**Alarm #3: Stop work.** This is the tough one. Perhaps it's because of that job satisfaction, but I find this to be the most difficult part of the entire "three alarm" process. The idea is to set the alarm for a time that you want to quit each day. My time fluctuates during the year but it's typically 5:30 p.m. Call me at 5:29 p.m. and you will get me, but if you wait until 5:31 p.m., I'm out.

And that is the Three Alarm process.

## Down the Rails

In terms of "degrees of difficulty," I'd say the hardest step is to stop working and leave. But know this: It's also the most important. Think of it this way: Each morning you get up, get dressed, drive to the station and step on a train that is sitting and waiting for you. When you board at 7:30 a.m., it slowly pulls away and gets going. Your day has started. Before long, the train is screaming down the track. Things are happening: Phone calls, quotes, decisions, deliveries, and sales calls. Your day has turned into a cacophony of activities.

But by the end of the day, your train/day doesn't gently glide in and stop, allowing you to step off and head home. It's going 100 miles an hour. You've got lots of tasks and pressures and deadlines, but you have committed to quitting at 5:30 p.m., so you force yourself to jump off the train, roll down the grassy hill, get up, dust yourself off, go home, rest, be with and present to the fam, wake up, and do it all over again tomorrow.

## The "One-Week" Experiment

I decided to try this new time management experiment for one week without changing anything else. (Over the years, anytime I decide to make a major change in my life— such as the time I went vegetarian for four months—I make a one-week commitment to it and at the end of the week reassess whether to continue. I figure it this way: I can do anything for a week).

When I tried the three-alarm regimen, there were immediate results. After just a couple of days, I discovered something very interesting. Near the end of the day, around 4:45 p.m., I would be scanning my task list trying to squeeze in one or two more items before the day ended. Then, realizing that I only had 45 minutes left, in the day, I would choose the most important thing to do rather than the thing that I wanted to do. Simply put: With less time to waste, I wasted less time. I made really good choices. I got a lot done.

At the end of that first week, I looked back and assessed my results and the lessons learned. Not only was I shocked at the amount of work I got done, the quality of my choices meant that the things I accomplished were the right tasks. In fact, I soon found that the things that didn't get done really didn't belong on my task list to begin with.

Because I limited the amount of time to work, the things that I chose to do were worthwhile. I ended up getting more done in less time. Go figure. Naturally, I am not the first to make this discovery. If you can fight through the author's mammoth ego and read *The Four Hour Work Week*, you'll see that he draws the same conclusion. The only difference is 5 million people read his book and I'd be happy if five family members read mine.

This "three alarm" system has changed the way I work. I vary the start and stop times in accordance with my workloads, but typically stay consistent. Amazing satisfaction comes from ending my day at 5:30 p.m. I find that I am more rested and far happier as a result of drawing this line in the sand and then adhering to it. Stopping when the alarm goes off in a "pencils down, students" kind of way has not gotten any easier, but the consistency with which I accomplish tasks has skyrocketed my productivity and the results of the work that I do.

And the system is not just for people working from their home or car. It works just as well in an office environment. Start work at your appointed time, stop work at your appointed time. Don't delay your start time with extraneous tasks, busy work, or excessive socializing. You can engage with your co-workers until that second alarm sounds. Then get to work. As the day moves along you'll find yourself prioritizing tasks so that you can finish on time. When the third alarm goes off, go home.

Whether you work from home, car, or office, the secret to three-alarm success is not to cheat. Don't try to squeeze one more thing in by staying "at work" an extra half hour just one day, or that will soon turn into an extra hour or an extra day. Imagine that your boss locks the office at quitting time and you must go home. You'll soon find that you're squeezing non-essentials out of your day in order to make what's important happen while you're still on the job.

Sales Tip #15

# THE THREE BEST SELLING MONTHS OF THE YEAR!

# #15: The Three Best Selling Months of the Year!

Without question, the three best—and most important—selling months of the year are:

## September, October, and November

Again, I said “best” and “most important.” Let’s break those two things down...

### Why the best? Several reasons:

1. **Summer is over.** When Labor Day hits, it’s the unofficial end of summer. Vacations are over. Kids are back in school. Mentally, people re-engage in the business of business. The end of the year is approaching and things need to get done! It’s an attitudinal thing. There’s nothing on the calendar that tells people, “Let’s go!” But there is a definite and noticeable shift that you need to be aware of and take advantage of.
2. **It’s our last chance.** For many of us, the arrival of September is a recognition that we have wasted a lot of time and procrastinated much of the year away, making excuses as to why our prospecting and new business development promises have not been kept. A lot of salespeople start the year off with a goal and a series of “This time, I mean it” New Year’s resolutions. Then, “suddenly,” it’s August and we realize that very little has happened. This block of time gives us one final opportunity to make good on those sales activity goals. Waste it and we’ll have to wait until Q1 of the following year for our next chance.
3. **It’s a finite amount of time.** Why does that matter? Well, why does Lent work? Imagine giving up chocolate or meat or TV entirely, that is, F-O-R-E-V-E-R? It’s a great concept and certainly admirable, but is it realistic? Probably not. “Forever” is a long, long time. But, tell a Christian to give up something for 40 days or so and it works because there is an endpoint to it. It’s a personal challenge that has a reward on the other end. You’ve accomplished something!

Similarly, commit to increasing your sales activity for a finite amount of time (in this case, September 1 to November 30) and it’s not too difficult to wrap your brain around it. That’s not to say that it’s easy to do, even for just 90 days, but it’s easy to understand and easy to try because you know it is not forever.

### Why most important? Well...

1. **The selling cycle**—There is no instant gratification in sales. The delay between the activity and the results is typically three-to-six months. Translation: work hard now and see the



results later—much later. Your sales volume for the month in which you are reading this manifesto is already in the books. By and large, you could step off the curb and get run over by a bus, go on vacation, or prospect hard every day and still have the month that you were going to have.

- 2. The calendar—** Like it or not, things tend to slow down at the end of the year, beginning with Thanksgiving, when the world seems to go into holiday mode. There is a renewal that happens in January, but as the sand runs out of the hourglass and December 31 approaches, “Call me after the holidays” becomes an oft-heard mantra. September, October, and November represent a significant chunk of opportunity that cannot be recaptured in December.

## I Was Told There Would Be No Math

The idea is to increase your sales activity roughly between Labor Day and Thanksgiving. What you do or don't do during this roughly 90 day period will determine how one year ends and how the next year begins. Let's do the math:

Three months, 20 business days per month, two new business calls per day. That's 120 sales calls. Three new sales calls per day, 180. Four? 240. Five would mean 300. And my target of 7 (as will be pointed out in Sales Tip #25) would mean a whopping 420 new business calls during September, October, and November. What do you think that would do to your sales volume in the months that followed?

I include this comment and prediction in my video sales tips every year and, without fail, I get people that reach out to me in January, raving about the results.

And, by the way, this same thinking applies if you are trying to eliminate the chance of a Summer Slowdown. If you buy into the theory that there is a three-to-six month sales cycle, the delay between the sales activity and sales results, then your slow summer happens not because of what you did during the months of July and August, but rather what you didn't do in the months leading up to them. This makes the second-best selling months of the year April, May, and June.

## Begin the Cycle

In reality, there is a Sales Calendar to follow. By breaking the year into smaller pieces, you can stay motivated, change marketing plans, and play right into your short-attention-span personality! Think, plan, and act in chunks of time. (Read more about the Sales Calendar in a white paper on my website, [AspireFor.com](http://AspireFor.com).)

For those who do not heed this advice or have missed out on the chance to commit to a best selling month, take heart. My favorite Japanese proverb (as if I knew dozens of them) goes like this: “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is today.” We are constantly given new opportunities to begin a finite cycle of prospecting. Life is forgiving that way. Now get out there and plant a tree!

Sales Tip #16

# THE BEST DEFINITION OF AN OBJECTION EVER!

# #16: The Best Definition of an Objection Ever!

I love this one. Wait, have I said that 15 times already? Whatever...

While doing some research on a webinar I was giving, I looked to Wikipedia for a formal definition of the word, "Objection," and found this sales beauty:

## An Objection is a Request for More Information

Isn't that the best? Immediately, my entire frame of reference around the subject of overcoming objections changed. Now, instead of hearing a customer say, "Your price is too high" and seeing that as the brick wall, I interpret it as, "Give me a reason to buy from you other than price." When a customer says, "We already have a vendor," you should be hearing, "What's your differentiator?"

From childhood, we are taught to respect authority. Listen to the teacher. Obey the officer. "No" means no! This programming affects the way we salespeople hear objections. We see them as final. The best we can hope for, we think, is to be a backup in the hopes that an incumbent vendor trips up and we can step in.

No more. Now, seeing an objection as an opportunity instead of a problem, we can move past the negative words and step around the brick wall. We can hear it as, "Tell me more," instead of as "No!" You'll see how to apply this thinking in the next two sales tips.

Sales Tip #17

**THE BEST WAY  
TO OVERCOME  
THE “YOUR  
PRICE IS  
TOO HIGH”  
OBJECTION!**

# #17: The Best Way to Overcome the “Your Price Is Too High” Objection!

We have already talked about holding your price if you are the non-incumbent vendor (“Is that your best price?”) and how important it is to have gathered up all the information necessary prior to coughing up a number. This tip takes it a little further and examines a second scenario: price objections from an existing customer. But before we get there, let me say one more thing about your efforts to become the vendor of record.

## Risky Business

When you are trying to replace another supplier with whom the prospect is currently working, it’s important to understand the emotions behind his objections. On the surface, it might seem to be about laziness. After all, if you are not the incumbent vendor, you are asking someone to work. On top of everything else the buyer or project manager has to do, you are asking him to review his current supplier, research you, perhaps spend the time to visit your shop, and add yet another burden to already busy days. You will never hear someone tell you that it’s just too much work and they got other things to do. That is like someone saying, “I just don’t feel like doing my job.” But they are feeling it nonetheless.

When you ask a company to switch vendors, you are also asking someone to take a risk—to move from a known quantity to an unknown. The prospect could even be putting his job in jeopardy if he changes vendors and something goes wrong. Overall, people do not like change and they especially do not like to move from the known to the unknown. Even if the prospect is not totally happy with his current vendor, it’s still the devil he knows and there is a comfort in that.

All these issues circle around one key point: Fear. People are often just plain afraid to change vendors. Remember, you are selling from the outside. You don’t know what inside pressures are being applied or what has happened in the past. One way to overcome this fear is to go right down Main Street and deal with the issue directly:

“I recognize that this is a big decision and that making a change can be risky. So, let’s talk about it. What do I need to do to make you comfortable to choose me as your vendor? Would you like to do a plant tour? Would you like some references? May I show you some results from campaigns we’ve worked on?”

First recognizing, and then minimizing, the fear factor will help smooth over any bumps in the selling road when you are trying to replace an existing vendor.

# We Shall Overcome

Reminder: Overcoming the “price” objection from the outside is contingent upon the amount of information you have gathered regarding how the piece works, a.k.a. “The story behind the job.” If all you know are the specs, all you can fall back on is lowering your price. If you’ve asked good, qualifying questions about what the client is trying to accomplish, you can draw from that information so that you do not have to lower your price but rather remind the customer the value you are bringing.

## They’re Inevitable

Okay, now let’s talk about the price objections that come from your current client base.

First, understand that price objections from existing customers are inevitable. Regardless of how you view your own standing in an account, you are still just a line item, an expense on the balance sheet, and, as such, are always subject to review by some bean-counter pointing out, “Hey, we could save a lot of money by going out to bid.”

No matter how long you have worked with a customer, how well you have done, or even how many irons you have pulled out of the fire, you are going to be challenged eventually. Keep this in mind when you are pricing out jobs so that you don’t get caught with your hand in the cookie jar because you decided to charge a price you thought you could get away with.

## Do not ever take a single order for granted.

The day that you hear yourself say, “They love me. I’ve got that account locked up,” is the first day of your last days with that account as your client. Make no assumptions!

To fend off objections from existing customers, heed the advice of Tip #17:

## Make Deposits in the Bank of Goodwill

The Bank of Goodwill is a fictitious institution whose ledger carries either a positive or a negative balance. It measures how you stand at an account in the eyes of your customer. If you do something well, such as meeting a rush deadline, your balance goes up. The client recognizes the value that you’ve brought to the situation and the sun shines down upon you. On the flip side, if you screw up a job or deliver something late or miss a quality standard or if she doesn’t understand your value as a vendor, your balance goes down.

## Speak Up

In either case, that needle moves only if the customer acknowledges what's happened. In other words, if you drive through a blizzard to drop off an important job but if not enough people at the company knows that you've just done the impossible, it doesn't count. You may know that you've done a good thing, but your belief in who you are has no bearing. This is precisely why you need to tell the client how good you are.

Do not expect praise from a customer whenever you do something extraordinary. You might get a, "Thank you," but the fact that they are tied up in their own world, coupled with a lack of understanding about what had to happen on your end to make something go right, means that those two words are all you will receive. Unless...

...You write them a thank you note. That's right, despite the fact that you are the hero, the one who rode through the snow uphill both ways, you are the one thanking them. You are thanking them for the opportunity to be of service and to "demonstrate the kind of service that all vendors talk about." Go over the details of the order and—here's the important part—cc everyone you can think of at the company who might care about this delivery miracle.

Essentially, you are patting your own back while telling the client how great you are. Perhaps you are reluctant to call attention to your actions because you're the modest type or feel that you only did what any good company should do. But if you don't do it, no one else will.

## Now fast-forward...

One day, some pencil-necked, bespectacled character out of a Norman Rockwell painting walks down the hall from Accounting and into the Buyer's office and talks about how much money could be saved if everything went out for bid. If that Buyer doesn't know how good you are because you have not told them, your account is in serious jeopardy. You need to have multiple Sponsors within each account, especially your top customers.

The best way to beat an objection is to avoid it entirely. That happens when you:

- First, first recognize and realize that the price objection will find you, and
- Prepare for it by regularly reminding the customer, "This is why you buy from me."

No account is immune to the danger of being replaced, but couple Tip #17 with lessons from the next tip, and you will have the best chance possible to keep riding that wave before it ultimately hits the beach.

Now to that other major objection...



Sales Tip #18

**THE BEST WAY TO  
OVERCOME THE  
“WE ARE HAPPY  
WITH OUR CURRENT  
VENDOR” OBJECTION!**

# #18: The Best Way to Overcome the ‘We Are Happy With Our Current Vendor’ Objection!”

An old joke:

A man dies and goes to heaven. St. Peter greets him at the Pearly Gates, offers his condolences for his recent passing, and then surprises the man by saying, “Today, we are having a special. You can spend half a day in hell and half a day in heaven and then decide where you would like to spend all eternity.” After some convincing, the man agrees and is instantly transported to hell for the morning.

When he opens his eyes, he finds that hell is not at all what he thought it would be. Despite his long-held beliefs, the man walks into a room that is air-conditioned, full of old friends and beautiful women carrying cold beers and chicken wings. It has screens on every wall featuring not only his favorite sports teams but highlights of his own sporting conquests over the years. He is greeted warmly by all and the time races by. Before he knows it, it’s noon. Time to check out heaven.

Up he goes. Now heaven is exactly what he thought it would be: people are wearing wings and dressed in white robes. Kenny G music is being piped in and people are holding hands and singing Kumbaya over and over and over and over. Time drags, but eventually it’s 5 p.m. and he is back speaking with St. Peter who asks him, “Well, what do you think? Where would you like to spend all of eternity?”

Somewhat embarrassed, the man nonetheless replies, “Hell,” and with that is instantly transported back to the depths of Hades. This time, however, he finds an entirely different experience waiting for him. He faces raging fires and tar pits. He is being whipped and poked by menacing demons. Confused and angry, he demands to see Satan himself.

He walks into the devil’s office, where Satan says to him, “I understand we have a problem.” “We absolutely do,” replies the man, angrily. “When I was here this morning, there were friends and women and beer and the room was air-conditioned. Now, I am being completely mistreated and I feel deceived. I demand to know why everything changed.” Satan looks at the man and says, “There is a perfectly good reason: This morning you were a prospect and now you are a customer.”

Put another way, “This morning I was trying to impress you and now I know I’ve got you locked up.”

# You're Not Alone

I assure you, everyone already has a vendor that does what you do. There is a Pez dispenser packed full of salespeople and vendors who look just like you, each with has his or her own set of accounts, accounts that you are trying to get into. Do you actually expect prospects to be thrilled that another sales rep has finally graced them with their appearance? You will not be greeted with wings and beer. You are more likely to hear that they are happy with their current vendor and do not really want to be bothered hearing from you.

Along with the "Your price is too high," the "We already have a vendor" objection is another one that is inevitable and that you must be prepared to conquer. To overcome it, apply the lesson we learned in Tip # 17:

## Remember Why We Lose an Account

Here's a fun fact that goes back about 40 years: What's the number one reason that we lose an account? Hint: It's not price, and it's not poor service, and it's not even because we messed up an order. It's this:

**The number one reason we lose an account is the customer believes we've stopped working for him/her.**

It's only natural for someone to stop working hard on an account once the company has become a customer. We schmooze and we hustle and we give preferential treatment when trying to convert a prospect, but after an order or two we turn our attention to the next prospect, leaving an existing account to ask, What about me? The showroom and the service department can be two very different worlds.

Application of this sales tip takes two forms: Your prospects and your existing customers.

## The Opportunity

First, when you hear these words or something similar grumbling coming from a prospect, see it for what it is: An opportunity. Despite the fact that they claim to be happy, there is room for doubt, doubt that you cast upon the situation. Remember, an objection is a request for more information, so give the prospect some information on why they should switch to you.

Consider saying something like this, "I'm glad to hear that you are happy with your current vendor. If they're producing your work in a timely manner at an economical price, they're a good

vendor. But let me ask you something: When is the last time they brought you a new idea? Are they still working hard for your business by constantly questioning the status quo? If they are, then they are a great vendor and quite frankly I hope you never leave them. But if they're not, perhaps it's time to bring in a fresh set of eyes."

It's never a good idea to badmouth the competition. This reflects poorly on you more than it does on them. But taking this approach casts the shadow of doubt on the incumbent vendor without crossing the line of professionalism. And by pointing out that a prospect's current vendor may no longer be doing the job, the door of opportunity cracks open.

Your next step is to ask those same open-ended questions we covered previously in order to learn more about the company and its challenges. The goal is to present a new solution, a better idea, and not just a lower price.

But while you are reading these sales tips and learning how to overcome this objection from the outside, know that right now, at this very moment, someone is calling on your accounts in the hopes of unseating you. Therefore...

## The Threat

The second application of this objection is to make certain that your existing accounts say the right words when approached by other salespeople. What would your client say if another sales rep, one with the same reading list as you and knows Sales Tip #18, came calling in an effort to unseat you. Here's a hint: Assume this will happen! One way to be confident in their response is to have consistently brought your client new ideas, told them about your exemplary service, and reminded them why they buy from you.

Your existing accounts are at risk every day. Look two or three months ahead and see which jobs are coming up for reorder. Call the client and use words such as, "Let's review this order to make certain that we are producing the best solution possible. I don't ever want to take your business for granted. I am aware that you get contacted on a regular basis by my competition and I want to make certain that you know that I am continuing to work hard for you."

Odds are that your competition is on its heels when it comes to their existing clients. It is hardly unusual when, with the hard work done and a new account secured, the sales rep looks towards the next conquest. Let them become complacent and make the deadly assumption that their customer base is content, that all is good. That is your opportunity to plant the seed of doubt. But it is equally likely that you are on your heels as well. Think: When's the last time you brought in a new idea?

Phew! Those last few tips required deep thinking. Let's get back into the shallow end of the pool with something that is light and quick and easy.

Sales Tip #19

# THE BEST TIME TO MAKE A SALES CALL!

# #19: The Best Time to Make a Sales Call!

This tip follows the thinking that success breeds success:

## The Best Time to Make a Sales Call is Right after You Make a Sale

Remember how we talked about the fact that the client can hear every emotion you're having, that if you are selling from a point of fear, it's in your voice, etc., etc. Well, the opposite is true as well:

When you make a sale, you are instantly in a good mood, regardless of the size of the order. Now is the time—even before you write that job up—to pick up the phone and try to close a few of those other orders out there that you've quoted. You are on a roll—keep it going!

Professional athletes talk about being “In the zone.” In golf, the cup sometimes looks as big as a manhole. Baseballs look more like beach balls. And sinking baskets is like throwing the ball into the ocean. In each case, there is a predetermined belief in the outcome that affects the result. Henry Ford once said, “If you think you can or think you can't, you're probably right.”

Attitude is everything when it comes to sales. There is a “rush” of adrenaline when a sale is made, a feeling of accomplishment and success. Take advantage of this moment. Use it as fuel for making that next sale:

- Do you have any outstanding bids out there? Follow up on them!
- Have you been actively seeking an appointment from one of your top prospects? Make one more phone call right now!

You are in the zone! Make the most of it. Use this boost of energy to your advantage. Be the ball, Danny.



Sales Tip #20

# THE BEST HOLIDAY CARD EVER!



# #20: The Best Holiday Card Ever!

It's Christmastime and your business mailbox (the Postal one, not the inbox one) is full of greeting cards from vendors. Each one is kind and thoughtful. You've probably received dozens, being as popular as you are. You hate to admit it but they're all starting to look the same as they come in two, three, or more at a time.

As is your custom, you created and produced a Christmas card of your own for clients and even had every employee sign it personally, the result of a signing party in the lunchroom: sign and pass, sign and pass, sign and pass. Each signature is at a different angle and off they go to your customers. Once received, they are opened and stuck on a wall alongside the dozens of other cards they received that day. Yawn.

But let me ask you something—How many Thanksgiving cards do get?

Personally, I get so few that I can actually answer the question: One. It comes from my auto insurance company, AMICA. (Great company! I've had them since I was 18 years old. Wouldn't leave them for a gecko, caveman, or a lower price.) Sure, AMICA is after my business just like all the others are, but it's not going to do what all the other insurance companies do and make it all about price. AMICA is different, right down to the holiday it chooses to remember because it knows my sales Tip # 20:

## Send Thanksgiving Cards

A Thanksgiving card is unique. It's different. It celebrates a great American holiday. It's non-secular (meaning that it doesn't single out a single religion). Oh, and the theme of the holiday is perfect for the message that you are trying to send: Thanks! Do you really think your Christmas card will stand out and get noticed? It's a nice sentiment, but why not show your client some appreciation and get ahead at the same time by standing out from the crowd?

Years ago, I used to write a letter to my customers, talking about my daughters and my life and anything new that was going on at the time. Despite the fact that it was deeply personal, I rarely heard back from anyone. It made me wonder if it was worth sending at all. Only when I stopped including it with my Thanksgiving greeting did I realize how much people appreciated it. Many called or commented when I saw them, "How come I didn't get your letter? Am I somehow in the penalty box?"

## Lessons Learned

Years of applying this sales tip has brought some unexpected benefits, each in the form of a valuable lesson:

On a whim, I bought some sheet labels—the kind that you use on a Christmas present, with a “To” and “From” and snowmen or pinecones printed on them— and included them in the envelope, too. They had my company name and phone number at the top (along with the name of my fictitious Label Manager, Ed Hesive, a joke that no one got). Because I could only put in a couple of sheets without exceeding the first-class stamp limit, people had to call me if they wanted more. Perfect! A reason to see my clients! I soon started dropping them off on the desks of prospects and found that this, too, resulted in a phone call: “Can we get more?” as people grabbed them off of the receptionist’s desk. Naturally, I’d left my card as well along with an invitation to call me to restock the inventory.

This experience also taught me that an interesting side door to use in order to gain access to a new account: “Market” to a prospect’s children. Anything that a child would enjoy became a great way of spreading my name. What parent doesn’t like bringing home a treat from the office? At Easter time, I would buy labels with bunnies on them. At Halloween, pumpkins. One year I distributed some baseball caps. Each was a big hit and each got me in the door.

The biggest lesson: Be different. Be different. Be different. If everyone is going left, go right. A Christmas card is an appropriate and thoughtful year-end greeting...that 99% of the population sends. It makes me wonder if anyone would notice you not sending one. But a Thanksgiving card will stand out and be remembered.

Coming up is another of my all-time favorites. Remember how I said that practically none of these tips are original thoughts? Well, Tip #21 is the exception...

Sales Tip #21

# THE BEST WAY TO LAND A BIG FISH!

# #21: The Best Way to Land a Big Fish!

When my three daughters were younger, they played softball in their hometown of Duxbury, Massachusetts, a small, pretentious and self-absorbed town south of Boston. At first, I attended their games and cheered them on. But being someone who was raised to donate a percentage of both my income and time, I quickly joined the league's Board and eventually became its President.

As is the practice at all volunteer events, I started league meetings by passing around a sheet of paper and asking people who have also signed up to help for their name and contact information. When I got home and started to input this data into my computer, I was astonished to read the email addresses:

- name@HarvardUniversity.edu
- name@BostonChildrensHospital.org
- name@StateStreetBank.com
- name@FidelityInvestments.com
- name@Gillette.com and so on...

Holy smokes! I was working with C-Level executives and big-time decision-makers/influencers! That's when it occurred to me: Slouches don't volunteer.

It's this thought which formed the basis for this Farquharson-original one-word sales tip:

## Volunteer!

If John or Priscilla Farquharson were writing this tip, they'd point out the obvious reason to give of your time: It's the right thing to do, my parents would tell you. We should all chip in on a regular basis. You'll feel good about yourself and sleep better at night knowing that you gave back. But there are some ancillary benefits as well: You will meet the kinds of people others will spend years trying to get in front of. What's more, depending on the frequency with which your group gets together, you will get a great deal of face time with these folks, perhaps even weekly! This affords you a great opportunity: Do your research, learn about the company, the industry, and especially the individual, and then start up a conversation.

## Make a Difference, Make a Sale

Whenever someone tells me that they landed a big account, I ask two questions. First, how long did it take and second, how did they make initial contact? That is, how did they get in the door?

The answer to the first question is always, always, always, 18 months or longer. The answer to the second question is always, always, always...a story, something like, "I was leaning up against the fence talking to another dad while we watched our kids play soccer. We got talking to each

other about work and lo and behold, he's got a job at Humongous Corporation, the one that I've been trying desperately to engage. That's how I got in."

As much as sales training or sales management guys like me talk about prospecting and research and having a process, etc., etc., big fish are often landed almost by accident. Now, let me clear: Volunteer for the right reasons—not because you think you could get something out of it—but pay attention and stay sales curious and you might just meet someone like-minded who works for a very attractive company.

But there is another angle to this sales tip to consider...

A group that I was doing some work with here in the Boston area is called the Wildflower Camp Foundation. We were raising money to send children who've lost a parent off to summer camp so that they can live in the bubble of safety it creates and heal. One Saturday in September, I was participating in a long-distance bicycle fundraiser and found myself standing at the base of a Finish Line-style banner that stretched across the road. It read, "Thank You Riders and Sponsors!" and it featured the logos of 24 different area companies (I counted), everyone from the New England Patriots Foundation to Gillette Corporation to CVS. It dawned on me that this was in itself a tremendous opportunity.

Imagine being a printer and donating that banner. What would it set you back, maybe \$100? But think: In order to complete the job, you would be asked to contact each of these 24 companies to get their logo. That's like buying 24 free "get in free" passes for \$100!!! Can't you just hear the conversation? "Hi, my name is Bill Farquharson. I was given your name there in Marketing as the person who can get me a logo to be printed on a large banner. No, no. I'll come get it personally!" And that's how you gained access to Gillette, CVS....

## One More Advantage

And there is yet another advantage to volunteering or working with charities...

Let's say you take my advice and do some research on the company prior to the start of your prospecting process. Checking out its website, you notice words to the effect of, "Proud sponsor of the Alzheimer's Association" or some other charity. Who do you think made the decision to throw some money in their direction? The intern? The receptionist? Nope. This call was made from the top. By getting involved with that charity and perhaps donating time, goods, or services, you are showing a common interest, likely with this prospect's CEO or President.

I know of a former print company president in Memphis who, when he took over, declared that it would have the FedEx account within 18 months. Learning that FedEx was a key sponsor of the St. Jude's Golf Classic, he donated the printing and, as a result, was invited to the Pro-Am event that preceded the tournament. There, he rubbed elbows with the powers that be at FedEx. Guess who their print vendor became within the promised 18 months?

Pay attention to the sponsors of all local events: Concerts, fundraisers, music festivals, telethons, walkathons, bike-athons, and the like. Whose name and logo is on the banner or in the ad or

on the website? Banks, for example, spend 10 times as much money sponsoring as they do marketing as a way of demonstrating their commitment to the community. One great idea for gaining access to that bank is through the charities they support. Companies care that you care and if you care about the things your prospects care about, you can land some appointments, orders, and accounts and soon you won't have a care in the world.

## Some Random Thoughts on Big Fish.

I'm a big believer in the value of networking. I don't think you can have too many LinkedIn connections. LinkedIn can help you in ways that you cannot possibly predict. For example, when my middle daughter, Emma, graduated from Quinnipiac, she told me she wanted to get a job in microbiology research in Seattle. Plugging in those keywords ("Seattle," "microbiology," "research," "get Emma off payroll"), I came up with the name of the top research company in the Pacific Northwest and found its president. He was one connection away from me.

I reached out to our mutual friend and 45 minutes after I started the search, Emma had an interview set up. 45 minutes! It absolutely blew my mind. By building a strong and robust LinkedIn network, you increase your chances of knowing someone who knows someone who is married to someone who works at Humongous Corporation and would be happy to make an introduction. Your LinkedIn network should be in the thousands. Make it a part of your daily/weekly regimen to connect, connect, connect.

Overall, you should have seven Big Fish prospects identified and be actively pursuing five, with two in the bullpen just in case one flames out. It takes just as much time to write up a \$100,000 order as it does a \$1,000 order, and getting to the sales stratosphere is going to require a few \$100,000 orders. That means you need to go Big Fishing.

So tap into that network of yours or find some wonderful organization and give of your time, making certain that you get to know the other volunteers. First and foremost, it is the right thing to do, but it can also have some profitable side benefits!



Sales Tip #22

# THE BEST PLACE TO LOOK FOR KILLER-GOOD PROSPECTS!



# #22: The Best Place to Look for Killer-Good Prospects!

In my live and online presentations on the subject of, “Where to Look for Prospects,” I discuss four of five primary hunting places, one of which is “Your Environment.” This is the inspiration for Tip #22:

## Be Sales Curious

You’ve seen this phase sprinkled throughout this book. Being sales curious means paying attention to the sales opportunities in your everyday life, working your way in, finding the decision-makers, and creating a mutually-beneficial solution that results in a sale. Here’s an example:

I mentioned in the last tip that my daughter Emma is a graduate of Quinnipiac University, a small school in Hamden, Connecticut, but she began her college career at my alma mater, University of Massachusetts/Amherst. When my ex-wife (also an alum) and I dropped her off for her freshman year, we attended a Welcome Parents event and were shocked when a professor said, “You parents should be very proud. This is a smart group. The average GPA of this year’s freshman class is the highest it’s ever been: 3.53.” My jaw dropped. Leaning over, I said to her mother, “Had that been the case in 1978, I wouldn’t have gotten in!” “Neither would have I,” came the reply.

3.53? For UMass? Everyone’s backup school in 1978? It didn’t make sense...until I thought about it for a while and applied some sales curiosity. When I started trying to understand why this state school was now the belle of the college ball and on everyone’s go-to list, it soon became clear. Think about it:

- Johnny graduates from high school with a GPA high enough to get into his first two college choices. Both are small, private, out-of-state schools.
- Johnny’s Mom and Dad sit him down and say, “Sorry, big guy. We don’t have \$45,000 a year for you to attend St. Michael’s, so you will have to go to an in-state public school, one that costs half of that.
- So, Johnny takes his outstanding GPA to UMass/Amherst and in doing so, takes the spot of Bobby, who’s 2.80 GPA would’ve been enough years ago, but which now leaves him out in the cold. Repeat this scenario often enough and you can see why UMass/Amherst set a GPA record that year.

So where is the opportunity? Where does being sales curious lead you? UMass/Amherst certainly doesn’t need your help. They’ve got all of the people they need. But those smaller private schools are likely losing applicants and would definitely love to talk to someone who might be able to help them. That’s being sales curious!

# Pay Attention!

Every day, there are opportunities all around you. You just need to pay attention. An article in The Wall Street Journal says that banks in the state can now sell life insurance. Bulk mail arrives at home and someone absolutely destroys your name and then claims, "We maintain close, personal relationships with all of our clients." You decide to take a night class and look around to find that half of the seats are empty, each representing lost revenue.

All of these situations present opportunities for you to make a highly profitable sale, one that solves a problem. This gets back to the muscle group that I was talking about earlier in Tip #9. Learning the questions to ask and then applying them in one application after another opens up possibilities. It's work, but it's work that gets easier with experience.

It's kind of like the trick question, "What's the easiest language to learn?" The answer isn't English or Russian or Latin or Mandarin. The answer is, "Your first language." Well, the first time you apply this "sales curious" thinking will be your most difficult. But it will quickly become second nature to you. Solving problems and earning orders are the best parts of a salesperson's job.

Your best prospects are in your own environment. Pay attention, look around, and become sales curious.

Sales Tip #23

# THE BEST PROSPECTING PLAN EVER!

# #23: The Best Prospecting Plan Ever!

I have really good news for you!

While I believe that you absolutely, positively must have a step-by-step, week-to-week prospecting process consisting of a number of different contact methods (phone calls, letters, emails, postcards, samples, etc.), its makeup is irrelevant. In other words, although you need a process, what that process looks like is entirely up to you. Isn't that awesome?

There is no single prospecting process that will absolutely work 100% of the time. If there was, I would package it and sell it to you. Believe me. In fact, it's been my experience that the exact same prospecting process can be used by different people in different parts of the country at the exact same time and have a radically different results. I did work with a franchise group who proved this point when they reported in varying levels of success with the franchisor-recommended process. Some came up with nothing while others scored 7 to 10 appointments a month. It was a mystery that I never solved. What worked great for some was a disaster for others.

That said, here's what I believe to be the Best Prospecting Plan Ever:

**Week 1: Research, Introductory Letter**

**Week 2: Phone Call, Phone Call**

**Week 3: Postcard, Phone Call**

**Week 4: Email, Phone Call, Decision Time**

Let's take it one week at a time and see how we can apply many of the tips we've learned thus far throughout the process...

## First Impression

### ***Week One (Research, Introductory Letter)***

This where you make your first impression.

Your initial step is to research the prospect as outlined in Sales Tip #9. Let's review: Your goal is to find a way to finish the sentence that starts, "The purpose of my call is..." and discuss potential solutions for the business need that your research uncovered. Second Review: If you can't do this, go no further until you can. At this stage, don't sell anything!

Next, let's be different in our approach. (Remember Sales Tip #20?) As the old adage goes, you only get one chance to make a first impression. Others email or call. I like a good Introductory letter, and I like it for number of reasons:

- First, the written word is more powerful than the spoken word, so if you write a good letter, you can express yourself and make an impact.
- Second, no one does this kind of thing anymore. Everyone sends emails, leaving the mailbox empty for you to differentiate yourself.
- Third, there is more permanence to an introductory letter than to an email that can be discarded or deleted with the click of a keystroke.

The downside is that letter writing can be tedious. Even if you have a template (and I have some sample letters I'll send you if you email me: [bill@aspirefor.com](mailto:bill@aspirefor.com)), the task of personalizing, printing, and mailing will require more work than cutting and pasting an email.

If you decide to send a letter, make certain that it is on good company stationery, is grammatically correct and spell-checked, and that your prospect's contact information is perfect. Take it from someone with a last name that is often misspelled, you can completely destroy any value potential if you don't take the time to get a person's name right.

Steve Martin once said, "Some people have a way with words. Other people not have way." If you not have way, be certain to have someone else read your letter before adding a stamp (never use a postage meter...be different!) to a #10 envelope and sticking it in the mail.

The action statement in your letter should be something like, "I will call you the week of..." and your letter should go out at early enough so that it has arrived by the time you engage with your Week Two steps.

## Ongoing Prospecting

***Week Two: (Phone Call, Phone Call): Now you start your follow-up.***

In this process, the follow-up consists of two phone calls the week after you send the letter. I recommend making these calls on Tuesdays and Fridays. Why? Well, Tuesdays only because a long time ago someone told a young salesman named Bill Farquharson that the best business day of the week was Tuesday.

That piece of information stuck with me and for no reason other than that, pick up the phone and try to get an appointment while referencing the letter that they should have in their hands by now. If you get voicemail (and gosh, what are the odds of that?), use the suggestions in Sales Tip #6. You will want to make your second call on Friday.

Why Friday? For that answer, here's the transcript of one of my live presentations on the subject:

Bill: "Salespeople in the room, what is the worst day of the week to make a sales call?"

Majority of the Audience: "Friday!"

Bill: "Why?"

Some brave attendee, hoping that he is right: "Because no one wants to hear from a sales rep on Friday. People are thinking about the weekend and they've probably already left early to head to the beach or the mountains."

Bill: "Okay. And what is the second worst day of the week to make a sales call?"

Majority of the Audience: "Monday"

Bill: "Why?"

The same brave attendee, slowly realizing he is being set up: "Because no one wants to hear from a sales rep on a Monday. People are just getting their week going."

Bill: "And if you believe those two things, you've just blown 40% of the work week on assumptions."

Bill, twisting the knife a little more: "Owners and managers in the room, what is your quietest phone day of the week?"

Owner or Manager in the room, feeling quite smug and entitled to be helping Bill make his point: "Friday!"

And that is why Friday is a great day to make a phone call to a prospect.

Everyone else is making the same assumption as my audience majority and thereby setting you up to be successful. Once again, your competition is back on their heels. Follow-up on your introductory letter by making your first call on Tuesday (likely to result in voicemail) and your second call on Friday.

Your other action item for Week Two: Send out another set of Introductory Letters to a new group of prospects. Now, you've got two groups going.

## Move the Needle

***Week Three: (Post Card, Phone Call): Finding alternate ways to connect with your prospects.***

If you still have not gotten your Week One prospects on the phone, there are two steps to follow in Week Three:

1. Postcard: Handwrite a postcard in the manner laid out in Sales Tip #7. The postcard just needs to have your company name and logo on the other side. Remember that postcards

have a 100% readership, so you are sure to move the sales needle further, even if it doesn't feel that way.

2. Phone call: Make one more phone attempt. Remember, per Sales Tip #6: Be lighter and more relaxed, funny if you're funny but not if you're not.

Two more action items for Week Three: First, you need to make two phone calls to the letters that went out during Week Two. And second, you need to send out a new group of Introductory Letters to a new group of prospects. Now, you've got three groups going.

## Stop the Clock

Hold it! Let's take a sales tip #3 Time Management break. With three different groups of prospects at three different points in the process, there is a need for both organization and time management.

First, make certain that you are recording all your activity on some kind of tracking sheet. Because this is a unique process, you might want to use something other than your CRM. I have a simple document in the form of a Microsoft Excel sheet that I will be happy to send you—just email me at [bill@SalesVault.pro](mailto:bill@SalesVault.pro) to request it—but you can also use just paper and pencil.

Second, a word about time management: Eventually, you will have a steady flow of sales activity and a recommended number of minimum sales calls to make every day. To handle this activity, you should make it your goal to "frontload" your week. In other words, try to have at least 75% of your prospecting activities done before the end of business on Wednesday. If you can make some extra calls at the beginning of the week, it lightens the load tremendously as you go into Thursday and Friday. By procrastinating, you are begging Murphy's Law to kick in.

Now back to our process...

## Wrap It Up

***Week Four (Email, Phone Call, Decision): Time to wrap it up.***

If by Week Four you still have not made contact with your Week One prospects, you can try making one final phone call or perhaps send an email, but then it is time to make a decision: Do I continue to prospect regularly, call occasionally, or not at all?

"How long should I keep going?" is a question frequently asked during my presentations and coaching/conference calls. My answer is typically some version of, "Well, how badly do you want to do business with them? If you want them just a little, then stop here. If you want them a lot, either keep going or put them on the shelf for a month or two and then revisit this prospect."

Over time, prospecting takes on the same characteristics as advertising. Car manufacturers keep their ads in our face all day long, but most of us buy a car only once every three to four



years. Why do they continue to send their message? So that when you are in the market, their name will be top of mind. The thinking for sales people is exactly the same: The longer your prospecting efforts go on, the more equity you will build in an account.

## Out of the Blue

Very often, sales reps will tell me that they received a call from someone they pursued 6+ months earlier, but with whom they never made a live connection. The prospect tells them, “I didn’t need anything back then and I was busy with another project, but I never forgot your diligence and persistency and I need to talk to you now because now I do need something.”

Naturally, you are not going to connect with all of the names on your prospecting list. In fact, it’s been my experience that you will not get any kind of closure from 40% of your prospecting contacts. It’s up to you to decide what to do with them and when. And just to muddy the waters a bit, let me add one more point to this discussion of whether to continue the pursuit...

I spoke earlier about having a Target Market—knowing who “your” customer is and isn’t. I like doing business with people who value the work that I do. They are professional and courteous. They return phone calls and emails promptly. As such, if I am pursuing a new prospect and I have left multiple messages that have gone without a reply, part of me wonders if that person isn’t showing me what kind of businessperson he is.

Over the years, I have chased down and ultimately done business with a few of these chronic non-responders and, invariably, something bad happens during the relationship (they really take their time paying my bill, for example). That’s when I say to myself, “Dammit, Bill. He showed you what kind of businessperson he is back when he ignored your constant call attempts and you didn’t listen.”

It’s just something to keep in mind as you ponder whether to do business with someone who does not pay you the courtesy of a reply phone call.

One final point about this Sales Tip. I kind of contradicted myself at the outset—did you catch it? I said there was no single infallible prospecting process, that they were all pretty much the same, and then made the bold claim that this one is the best. My suggestion is that you give it a try for a few weeks and then make adjustments. Or, take parts of this and add your own steps. Make it yours.

## What About Email?

Quick aside: Years ago, I received an interesting email from a Cisco sales rep in California. In it, he claimed he wanted to “discuss my business objectives and how he could help me to meet my needs.” I quickly scanned his message and then hit “Delete.”

A couple of days later, he forwarded me the original email and added, “Hi, Bill. I haven’t heard from you and am still interested in speaking with you....” Immediately, I felt guilty for not replying

and realized that he had somehow called me out. I picked up the phone and spoke with him personally, starting off by saying that I was already a customer so he could turn off his sales jets. But I was curious about his prospecting process and asked him for the details. The rep, Matt Hayes, told me that he sends the original email out assuming that it's going to be thrown away. Sending the follow-up is his way of shaming people into responding (my words, not his). He said that he gets about a 10% appointment rate, something that I would consider outstanding in our world.

As I said, there are lots of different prospecting plans you can use and one is not better than the other...

Except for mine, which is the best!

Oh, man, we are in the home stretch...

Sales Tip #24

# THE BEST SIDE DOOR TO USE TO REACH A DECISION- MAKER!

# #24: The Best Side Door to Use to Reach a Decision-Maker!

Here's another Bill Original Sales Tip:

## Connect With A Salesperson

If you are in sales, you have a universal connection with other salespeople. They are your brothers and sisters under the skin. They are fighting some of the same fights that you are. They understand the challenge of voicemail and finding the right person to talk to. They know how hard it is to be you. Regardless of the product or service they sell, they get it—and they will help if you ask them!

By contacting someone on a prospect's sales team, you will get a lot of inside information, as well as the potential for some assistance in making contact. They will tell you where the power is and isn't. They can help you get around roadblocks and save a lot of time. And they will help you because they understand the difficulty of the job.

## Where you find them?

The prospect's website is the obvious first place to look. Check out the "About Us" tab and then the "Contact Us" for a list of salespeople in your area.

The other and more likely source—since many companies either don't have salespeople or don't list them on their website for fear of having them pilfered by headhunters—is LinkedIn. Search the company and add the word "Sales" and see what comes up. And don't forget to check in with former employees (in sales positions or not) since they can also be great sources of information and can talk without fear of retribution.

## From the Inside

If you are lucky enough to connect with a salesperson, don't just request information from them, but also ask how you can be of service to them. Ask about their job. Make inquiries to determine what you might be able to do to help.

You might come away with a sales opportunity derived completely from the inside. This is one of my favorite approaches for calling on a company. It's amazing what you learn when you speak

to someone outside of the decision-making bubble. A bank manager, for example, is the person applying the ideas Marketing comes up with. I bet she is a great source of information on how to do it better. Why not walk into your bank and talk to your manager and find out for yourself what the latest promotion is, what's working, and what they think might be a better idea?

Let's finish this 25 Best Tips List with a word about Diligence, the wildcard in your pursuit of success...

Sales Tip #25

# THE BEST WAY TO MAKE SEVEN SALES CALLS A DAY!

# #25: The Best Way to Make Seven Sales Calls a Day!

Everyone has time in their day to make sales calls. Everyone. How many calls are made depends on the ability to apply this sales tip. I believe you can average seven a day but since I'm an over achiever, I'll show you how to make 10 or more.

Now before you send me an angry email or tear the book up in disgust, hear me out. I didn't say that you have time to make seven sales calls a day. If you are a legacy sales rep with a full book of business, you probably don't. Only those just starting out in sales have a schedule empty enough to allow for an intense focus on prospecting.

Yes, yes, I know that you are busy. And I understand the cruel reality of sales: The more successful you become, the less time you have to become even more successful. But still, I believe that you have it in you to make 5, 7, or as many as 10 calls a day. Here's how:

## Make Two Calls at a Time, Several Times a Day.

We all have a task list. But before you start to tackle the next "To-Do" item, make two sales calls.

*Boom-boom.*

Then get to that task. When it is completed, but before you move on to the next item on the list, make two sales calls.

*Boom-boom.*

By following this pattern all day long, you will find that you blow right past five calls a day and past seven. In fact, you'll likely end up in double-digits. Most people will tell me that they don't have time to make seven calls a day. And I believe them. But everyone will admit that they have time to make two calls. And nearly everyone will say they have time to make two calls more than once a day.

What it takes to accomplish this, it should be noted, is up-to-date and readily available list of prospects to reach out to. I call it, "Prospecting on a dime." Whether it's a file on your computer or a sheet of paper on your desk, you want to have those names and phone numbers readily available so that when the opportunity presents itself—or you decide to seize the opportunity—you are able to get to the task of prospecting quickly before some other task jumps in to fill the space.



That's All Folks...For Now!

# FINAL THOUGHTS

# Final Thoughts

So, there you have it, my 25 Best Short-Attention-Span Sales Tips Ever... or should I say, "so far."

Just as when I talk about these ideas, writing about them has reminded me of other ideas that should also be shared, so, hopefully, there will be sequel to this volume. In fact, I already have 13 ideas written down.

When I give this presentation live, my brain is typically on Shuffle, so I sometimes kick out a dozen or so more bonus sales tips, sometimes replace an old tip with one I think is even better for a particular audience. The point is, this "25 Best" idea is a work in progress and rather like the Massachusetts Turnpike: Perpetually under construction.

Sales Tips are my favorite seminar subject and I give it in different forms. Sometimes I walk in with paper, a pen, and five words: "Why aren't you selling more?" Then, building on the answers to that question, I deliver the tips I think are most relevant.

But here's the point: No matter which tips or how many I present, the message is always nearly the same:

## Stick to the fundamentals.

Don't overthink this job of sales. Keep it simple, and remember the basics:

- 1. Learn how to make a high-value, well-researched sales call** by doing sufficient investigative work before starting your prospecting efforts. This will make all the difference in the world.
- 2. Make those calls on the best prospects you can find.** Understand not only where to look but who is best to look for, both in terms of your target market and the company that you work for. Know your sweet spot and know what and whom to avoid and listen to that inner voice or the feeling in your stomach when sizing someone up. The author Malcolm Gladwell calls it "thin-slicing" or having a "Blink moment."
- 3. Use a step-by-step prospecting process.** Develop your own or steal mine. The book is copyrighted, but the process isn't. And don't be afraid to change the process up every once in a while and test out new ways to get appointments.
- 4. If all else fails, work harder. Make more calls.** Set a minimum daily sales goal and then seek to exceed it. Make your number reasonable and achievable. If you can't do it yourself, find someone to report to and ask that he/she hold you accountable for hitting daily sales activity goals. Having an accountability buddy is how I got this book written.

# Want more tips like these?

If you've enjoyed these *25 Best Tips Ever*, check out The Sales Vault, where you'll find more ideas like these while taking advantage of the resources available to our members.

**The Sales Vault** brings together over 40 years of content I've developed as well as brand new content released every week—live workshops, workshop replays, courses, downloads, sales tips, blogs, and more—all aimed at helping you grow your sales. In addition to being a great sales resource, the Vault is a community of sales professionals and selling owners like yourself, sharing ideas and inspiration while gaining confidence and clarity. Visit [SalesVault.pro](https://SalesVault.pro) to learn more.

## Let's connect!

Connect with me on LinkedIn. Send me your thoughts and ideas, and sign up for the weekly newsletter via LinkedIn and have my sales tips and blogs delivered directly to your inbox.

I'll be here in my office if you need help. My contact information is below. That's my cell phone, but if you call me during normal hours, well, it'll probably go to voicemail because I get so many of those dang robo calls. So either leave a message (in thirds, of course) or call right back and I'll know it's you.

## Final words of wisdom...

When I was in high school, my older brother advised me to "Find a job that you love doing, for work is what will take up the most of your time." I did and I do. I hope you apply these tips, use them to solve some problems, earn some orders, find success, and pass it on. And I hope you, too, love doing it.

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Bill Farquharson's

# THE 25 BEST SALES TIPS EVER!



The 25 Best Sales Tips Ever! by Bill Farquharson

