

Cold Calls Leaving You Cold?

Let's put the selling back into sales.



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WHATEVER HAPPENED TO the cold call? What has happened to telemarketing? The more I work with salespeople the more I am aware of a trend away from the basic “meat and potatoes” type of selling we all grew up with.

I know that the consultative sale is the way to achieve a good long-term relationship with your customer. And yes, I know that it costs at least 10 times more to get an order from a new customer than it does to get one from an existing customer. But you still have to go out and get new customers. Always keep selling.

If you only rely on the customers you already have, I can guarantee that your business will go away. You might not do anything wrong - these customers may go out of business, be acquired by someone with other PCB suppliers or send their board buys offshore or to an EMS company. You can't work solely with your current customers and expect to have enough business in the long run.

A friend sent me the results of an effectiveness study from Proudfoot Consulting concerning how much time salespeople spend actually selling. Most salespeople felt they were spending about 50% of their time selling, but the study proved them wrong. According to this data, salespeople really only spend about 10% of their time selling! They spend most of their time handling administrative tasks and solving customer problems. Does this sound familiar?

Many salespeople tell me that if they go in front of new customers, their product will not get delivered on time. If this is true then their company has huge, potentially fatal problems. Certainly there are times when a company is in trouble and the salespeople have to hold their customers' hands, but this should be the exception and not the rule. Instead, this is what I hear from many salespeople:

1. If I don't stay in the office and solve problems, the shop will screw things up.
2. I can't sell until the company is performing perfectly.
3. Cold calls don't work. And I'm too old for cold calling anyway.
4. With the new voicemail systems, it makes no sense to call potential customers.
5. There is no new business out there.
6. With our pricing, there is just no point in trying to find new customers.
7. I am very good at taking care of the accounts I have. I don't need to find new ones.
8. I can't sell until we have an updated Web site and literature to hand out.
9. You can only visit people by appointment.
10. We just don't offer anything special.
11. If we only had _____ I could get a ton of business: (Fill in the blank: multilayer, military, Teflon - whatever your company doesn't have).
12. My customers don't want to see me.
13. The buyer is on the take.
14. They are sending all their boards to China.
15. I have never had to cold call before and I've done OK all these years.

If you are a salesperson and find yourself saying any of these things, you will fail. If you are a sales manager and you allow your salespeople to say these things, you should be fired. If you are an owner and you let your salespeople say these things, you will go out of business.

I can give you real-life examples of salespeople and companies that prospect, cold-call and telemarket. These are among the fastest growing PCB companies in the U.S.

1. Several years ago a young lady with six months of selling experience cold-called a major American OEM. Because she didn't know any better, she didn't make an appointment; she just walked in and asked to talk to the PCB buyer. She told him about her company and walked out with an order.
2. Another company relying completely on a five-person call center - with no previous PCB experience - grew its sales by almost 50% in 2004.
3. A company in the Midwest books over 200 orders a day, 40% by way of its Web site.
4. One salesperson I know of in the Southwest increased sales by 35% a year, thanks to three hours a day on the phone talking to new potential customers.
5. One California company has had a steady growth rate for the past 10 years. The sales force must talk to at least 10 new potential customers every week.

This is what we call sales; this is what salespeople are supposed to do. It's simple: You make enough calls, visit enough people and your sales will grow. No black magic, no cheating, no cutting corners. Just great salesmanship.

I'm sorry if this sounds tough, but it needs to be said. Think about it. Until next time, call up a potential customer who's a complete stranger and start selling. **PCD&M**

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