

ArcaMax Publishing Proudly Presents:

Special Report:

**The Top 10 Mistakes Made By Salespeople
When Using The Phone, And What You Can
Do To Avoid These Errors**

**Art Sobczak
President
Business By Phone Inc.
www.businessbyphone.com
(402)895-9399**

The Top 10 Mistakes Made By Salespeople When Using The Phone, And What You Can Do To Avoid These Errors

By Art Sobczak

Introduction

Mistake 10: Sending Unnecessary Literature

Mistake 9: Poor Telephone Image

Mistake 8: No Post-Call Review

Mistake 7: Lousy Listening

Mistake 6: Screener Misuse And Abuse

Mistake 5: Nonexistent Or Inadequate Questioning

Mistake 4: Poor Preparation

Mistake 3: Misunderstand Objections

Mistake 2: Reluctance to Get Commitment

Mistake 1: Opening Statements That Build Resistance, Not Interest

About Art Sobczak

Other Resources To Help You Get More Business By Phone

Introduction

Based on observing, listening to, receiving, and placing thousands of sales calls, I've put together my list of the Top 10 Errors Made by Salespeople When Using the Phone. The list details the most heinous, avoidable errors sales reps commit every day...miscues that sabotage their sales efforts.

Read through the errors and then pay particular attention to Action Steps. This is what you can do to avoid the errors. Follow the advice, and I know you'll be more effective.

Here are the mistakes, starting from Number Ten, working toward the top.

Mistake 10: Sending Unnecessary Literature

One of the best stalling techniques ever used by prospects (or more usually, non prospects) is, "Send me information on that." And they use it for a good reason. It works.

Every day this phrase chases sales rep off the phone, and sends them scrambling for the literature rack, tossing fistfuls of shiny brochures into oversized envelopes, convinced (mistakenly) that "I've got a hot one here." Perhaps you've fallen victim to this yourself. In my early days I know I did.

But this balloon of anticipation quickly deflates when the sales rep calls back, hearing, "uh, I didn't have a chance to read that yet." And the cycle continues.

Don't mistake "Send me literature" for a legitimate sign of interest-yet. And don't be fooled into thinking literature does your selling. Don't even be so presumptuous as to believe they will read your literature. Printed materials can be a fine complement to your sales effort. Emphasis on the word "complement" YOU still need to generate interest to the point where they deserve literature. Otherwise you're wasting valuable selling time.

Action Steps: When you get the "send literature" request, be certain the person is a legitimate buyer, and not someone trying to get rid of you. It's better to get the "no" now, rather than later, after you've already invested a few dollars worth of paper and postage, and lots of your precious time. If you hear the request early in the call, I suggest you respond with,

"I'll be happy to send something that summarizes what we discussed. Let me ask you, though, if you like what you see, I'm assuming we'll be able to do business together?"

Mistake 9: Poor Telephone Image

It's astonishing how many people give more thought to what color socks they'll wear, than to how they look to the other person.

Try an experiment. On your next 10 telephone calls pull out a piece of paper and make tally marks in two columns: "desirable" and "undesirable," describing the total image you form based on what the other person says, and how they say it. When you analyze it, it's befuddling that so many people fuss about their personal appearance, but ignore the way they "look" on the phone. And that can be fatal to teleprofessionals.

Action Step: The best way to improve the way you sound is to listen to yourself on tape. Every top performer in all other skill professions uses taping. Athletes, actors, singers, dancers, professional speakers . . . all review their performances on tape in order to improve. You need to do the same.

(For more information on the legalities of taping calls, and to see a device that helps you tape both sides of your phone calls, go to <http://www.businessbyphone.com/taping.htm>. Also, for a great self-study program on improving your phone voice, check out <http://www.businessbyphone.com/vs.htm>)

Mistake 8: No Post-Call Review

I cringe when I see sales reps grind out call after call, putting their fingers in "speed dial" mode, pounding the key pad immediately after disconnecting the previous call. They waste learning opportunities. That's why there are grizzled, veteran salespeople who have placed thousands of calls in their lifetime, but have no real experience to speak of. They don't REFLECT on what they have done. Learning doesn't take place while you're engaged in an activity. It takes place afterward, when you dwell on it. Just like reading a book, you retain more when you pause to reflect on, and react to, what you just experienced.

Action Steps: At the end of every call you place, simply ask yourself two questions:

1. What did I like about this call?
2. What would I have done differently on this call?

No time to perform this activity after your calls? Think again. You can't afford NOT to.

Mistake 7: Lousy Listening

Success on the phone does not mean dominating the conversation. Oh sure, you've likely heard such wisdom about listening before. It makes sense. But based on national averages, few people actually practice it. Listening experts say that most of us listen with only 30%-50% efficiency.

I don't know what causes salespeople to turn on the verbal waterfall once they get a moment of opportunity to speak. Fact is, the other person's desire to listen to you is in inverse proportion to the amount of speaking you do. Talk a lot, and their interest wanes. As does their desire to participate in the conversation diminishes the more you talk. They get bored. Plus, the more you talk, the greater the possibility you'll mention things they can object to.

Action Steps: Everyone knows how to listen. Technique is not the problem. The key is selling yourself on WHY you need to listen. It's the same with any activity. If your desire to do something is strong enough, you'll get it done. Therefore, when you find yourself taking a mental vacation during calls, ask yourself a question:

"Why do I need to listen to this person?"

The answer tends to snap you back to the proper perspective as you answer,

"Because what this person says will tell me exactly what I need to say in order to help them buy, therefore putting more money in my pocket."

Have your purpose in mind before and during every conversation.

Mistake 6: Screener Misuse And Abuse

I've heard sales reps refer to the screener as the bulldog, the iron gate maiden, the rejectionist, and other equally unflattering monikers. No wonder these callers have difficulty getting to buyers. They experience exactly what they expect: resistance, frustrating penetrating questions, and downright humiliation. That's because the callers use strong-arm tactics to try to go through, around, above, or under the screener. Basic psychology tells you that the more someone is pushed, the harder they resist.

Action Steps: To get to your buyers, all you need to do is help screeners do their job, which is protect the buyer's time so that only callers with something of value are allowed to spend time with the boss. Therefore, you need

to be sure you have a Justification Statement prepared in response to “What’s this in reference to?” It’s here that you sell the screener on putting you through. And you thought you were calling to qualify them? The screener is qualifying YOU! And based on your Justification Statement, they decide whether or not you warrant an audience with the buyer. So, be ready to explain results and benefits that you bring to the table. Do NOT say,

“We sell _____, and I want to talk to him/her about it.”

That normally elicits a response like, “We’re happy with who we’re buying from”

Instead, say something like,

“I have some ideas that have helped other retailers in your industry cut down on their advertising expenses while generating more store traffic. I’d like to ask Mr./Ms. Bigg a few questions to see if this would make sense for you to take a look at.”

Get Information From the Screener

Also, whenever you’re prospecting, you should ask questions before you get to the decision maker so you’re better-prepared when you do ultimately reach him or her.

Every piece of qualifying information you need on calls could potentially be gathered from others in your prospect’s organization. Switchboard operators, screeners, worker bees, and others in the decision maker’s department, people who actually USE what you sell . . . all can provide valuable insight—information that gains instant respect, and creates interest in the mind of the buyer.

You could say,

“You probably work closely with Ms. Bigg, is that right?”

Then begin your questioning:

“So I’m better prepared when I speak with her, there’s some information you could help me with first . . .”

(If you’d like more info on this topic, look at my ‘Getting Through to Buyers, While the Others are Screened Out,’ video program, <http://www.businessbyphone.com/gttb.htm>)

Mistake 5: Nonexistent Or Inadequate Questioning

If a doctor writes a prescription without proper diagnosis, it could be grounds for malpractice if the recommendation is faulty. When salespeople suggest treatment without diagnosis (which happens all the time) there's not the legal mechanism in place for malpractice (al-though it might not be a bad idea). What does happen, though, is usually disastrous for the caller: He loses credibility in the listener's mind, since the caller foolishly rambles on about what he/she wants to sell, not what the listener might be interested in buying. Therefore the prospect/customer channels energy into thinking of reasons why he should get the caller off the phone, instead of participating in a meaningful conversation. Ultimately, prospects and customers bring up objections as a result of poor questioning (see also reason Number 3), and lousy listening (Number 7).

Action Step: Map out your questioning strategy before your call. Instead of having a list of features and benefits you're intent on presenting, take all of your benefits and write them, one beneath another, down the left-hand side of a piece of paper. Then draw two columns down the page to the right of the words. Label the first column "Needs Filled/Problems Solved." Then for each benefit write out what need or problem the corresponding benefit satisfies. Label the right-hand column "Questions to Ask." For each need or problem write a question that would determine whether that situation existed. Use these questions during your call.

For example, let's say a business offered overnight delivery on orders received by 5:00 P.M., while all the other competitors cut off their ordering time at 12:00 noon for next day-delivery. The "Needs Filled/Problems Solved" would be the prospect often has last minute orders they require the next day, and their existing vendor isn't able to meet those requests, therefore it causes inconveniences, and maybe even lost business. Only in these situations would the overnight delivery be a main buying motivator. Otherwise it might be a "nice to know" feature that the prospect might be able to take advantage of in the future if he needed it, or worse, the prospect might think, "I never get in a situation where I need something that quickly. I don't care about that feature at all. Maybe that's why their price is higher." (See how presenting what you think is a benefit could actually create an objection?)

Make sure you don't present what you "think" is a benefit until you've confirmed it by asking the corresponding questions. Here are some examples:

"How quickly do you normally need delivery?"

“Do you ever need next-day delivery on orders you realize you need to place later in the day?”

“What do you do in situations like that?”

“What happens when you need it the next day, but have to wait for two days? What kind of inconvenience does that cause?”

You can see in this situation, if the questions uncovered the need/problem, the “benefit” would then truly be of value.

Mistake 4: Poor Preparation

Consider if an airline pilot got on the intercom just after takeoff and said, “Ladies and gentlemen thank you for flying with us today. We’re going to fly somewhere, I’m just not sure exactly where, but I hope it’s the right place.”

Absurd, right? Sure.

Now consider another scenario. A sales rep plops down in the chair, flips on the computer or pulls out prospect names, while at the same time dials the first number. If you’d ask him/her what’s to be accomplished on the call, you’d hear a vague response about a sale, appointment, lead, and so on. But that caller wouldn’t be able to tell you any more about how he/she planned on getting there than the hypothetical pilot could about reaching his destination.

Poor preparation ensures a sloppy, rambling call that’s like a kite without a tail, whipping in the wind, wildly changing directions.

On the other hand, you can and should choreograph your call before you place it. Just like Jean Claude-Killy said about ski racing,

“The outcome is determined by the time the racer is in the gate,” the result of your call is also determined before you pick up the phone.

Action Step: The most important step in a successful call is the first one: setting your Primary Objective. I define this as looking at where you are, and determining where you want to be at the end of the call. More specifically, ask yourself what you want to do at the end of the call, and what should they do at the end of the call. The objective must involve ACTION. If nobody’s doing anything, you’re no better off after the call than you were before. And after you’ve set your objective according to this definition you simply fill in the

blanks with what needs to happen for you to travel from point A to point B. You'll realize what information you'll need, and the information you'll want to present based on those needs.

Mistake 3: Misunderstand Objections

Before I go into companies and deliver sales training programs I always ask managers the areas they feel their reps need the most assistance. When they say, "We need the most work on overcoming objections," I'm in for a lot of work. The reason is, more objections are caused by sales reps than by any other factor. People object when reps don't question effectively, when they talk too much, (sounds like a couple of our earlier Top 10 Mistakes) and basically present features the person isn't excited about. Then when objections are voiced, these same reps feel as if they need to access their "objections flip chart" and retort with a slick, prepared objection rebuttal which will instantly win over the objector.

Fat chance.

Action Step: The best way to deal with objections is to prevent them from arising in the first place.

Ensure you have a fit before making a presentation. However, when objections do arise, the only way to professionally address them is to dig for the reasons behind them. Only then can you begin to understand it, and then perhaps answer it. I said perhaps, because there isn't an answer for every real objection, despite what some sales evangelists preach. Personally, my favorite response to an objection is,

"I see. Well, let's talk about that."

This lets the person know I won't pounce on them for their beliefs, but I do intend on sincerely discussing it with them. I suggest you do the same, and then question to figure out why they said what they did. You find that this is a painless, non adversarial way to deal with objections.

Mistake 2: Reluctance to Get Commitment

This is the activity that takes the least amount of skill to execute, but yet is the hardest for many people to actually perform: Asking for the sale or asking for commitment to take action.

Even if prospects are leaning in your favor, they might not volunteer the action you want unless you make it easy by inviting them to do business with you. I've seen a lot of money left on the table, and hours wasted on unproductive follow-up calls, both a result of not asking for the business, or at least asking for some commitment from the prospect.

Action Step: Build the asking habit. There's no secret or magic here. No hocus-pocus phrase that guarantees they'll say "yes" to your offer. No offensive closing technique with a warlike title like the "Blitzkrieg Close."

Very simply, if you want to get different results, you have to change your routine. If you're not asking for commitment or for the sale as often as you should, you need to analyze why, and then make the change.

If your problem is rejection sensitivity, modify the way you define rejection. Don't look at no's as rejection; look at no's as learning experiences that move you closer to a yes. Begin in all areas of your life. Get out of your comfort zone and ask for more of what you want. Better tables in restaurants, discounts on merchandise, whatever . . . just do it! And on the phone, ask for the sale more often. When someone is going to "talk it over," ask if they're going to recommend it. If they try to put you off by saying they'll "think about it" and call you later, ask them what the chances are they'll buy. Sure you'll get more "no's." But the positive answers you'll get save you time, and result in more business. Plus it will build the closing behavior.

OK, Drum roll please. The biggest mistake I see and hear sales reps make on the phone is . . .

Mistake 1: Opening Statements That Build Resistance, Not Interest

Within the first 15 seconds, you create one of two emotions within the person you're speaking to: Resistance or interest.

Nothing else.

Unfortunately, most callers create resistance. And that results in what they perceive as morale-killing rejection, along with an early exit from the phone call.

They start with an uninspiring line like,

"We sell _____ and I'd like to talk to you about them."

The listener then justifiably thinks, "So what? Why should I listen?"

Here's another sure resistance-builder.

"I sent you a letter and was wondering if you got it?"

So what if they did? What are they supposed to say? "Oh yes! Glad you called. I was just sitting here thinking that I should buy from you!"

Yeah, right.

What **SHOULD** you say during an opening to evoke interest? Here's the simple three-step success formula.

1. Introduce yourself and organization.
2. Most importantly, state an interest-stimulating, curiosity-piquing benefit that appeals to their desire to gain, or avoid loss, and,
3. Get them involved in a conversation. Remember, you want to do more listening than talking. Tell them that in order to deliver the potential benefit you alluded to, you need to get information. Here are examples,

"I'm Dan Fleming with Graphics Industries. We specialize in working with retailers in lowering overall advertising expenses while generating more store traffic. I've got a few ideas I'd like to discuss to see if this would be of any value to you and your company . . ."

Another,

“This is Karen Hamilton with Canton Supply. The reason I’m call-ing is that there’s the possibility we might be able to help you cut down on your expenses for the exact same cleaning items you’re now buying. To determine this, I’d like to find out what you’re using . . . “

If you asked questions of the screener as we mentioned earlier, and received good information, you could use that in your opener to personalize it even more.

“Ms. Davis, I’m Paul Cooper with Public Engineering. I under-stand that your division is now looking at upgrading your finishing process on ultramagnetic components. We have a process that has worked well for other manufacturers, and, depending on your requirements, might be something that would fit in nicely with your system . . . ”

Your calls to regular customers must have a grabbing opener also. Every time you call, without exception, have a Value Added Point. It’s anything that allows them to feel they’ve gained by simply talking to you. It can be good news, useful information, notification of a sale, ideas you have . . . anything they will perceive as useful.

“Sandra, it’s Linda with Dino Services. I was studying what you’ve been buying from us over the past two years, and I’ve got an idea here for a program that might just make your job a little easier . “

You could also use,

“I heard some interesting information, and you came to mind as someone who could really profit from it . . . ”

The real test to be sure you have a winning opener is to put yourself in the position of the person hearing it. Ask yourself if you would want to hear more if you were the buyer. Would you set aside whatever you were doing and willingly participate in the call? If not, go back to the drawing board before you fail the quiz with a real prospect.

And, be sure your opener says as much as possible, with as few words as possible. ONLY by appealing to their desire to gain, or fear of losing something, will you cause them to spend productive time with you, and eventually buy from you.

(For many more tips, ideas and word-for-word examples on interest-creating opening statements, including a fill-in-the-blanks template, check out our Special Report. Go to <http://www.businessbyphone.com/openrpt.htm>)

Special Report: The Top 10 Mistakes Made By Salespeople When Using The Phone, And What You Can Do To Avoid These Errors

By avoiding these 10 mistakes and following the Action Steps, you have the foundation for a professional presentation that both you and your prospect will feel good about. However, we've just scratched the surface of Action Steps, and if you'd like more information on making yourself a better salesperson, I invite you to take advantage of the information below.

Go and have your best week ever!

Art

About Art Sobczak

Art Sobczak, President of Business By Phone Inc., specializes in one area only: working with business-to-business salespeople--both inside and outside--designing and delivering content-rich programs that participants begin showing results from the very next time they get on the phone. Audiences love his “down-to-earth,” entertaining style, and low-pressure, easy-to-use, customer oriented ideas and techniques.

He works with thousands of sales reps each year helping them get more businesses by phone. Art provides real world, how-to ideas and techniques that help salespeople use the phone more effectively to prospect, sell, and service, without morale-killing “rejection.”

Using the phone in sales is only difficult for people who use outdated, salesy, manipulative tactics, or for those who aren't quite sure what to do, or aren't confident in their abilities. Art's audiences always comment how he simplifies the telesales process, making it easily adaptable for anyone with the right attitude.

For over 20 years Art has written and published the how-to tips newsletter, **TELEPHONE SELLING REPORT**, subscribed to by over two thousand companies worldwide.

Art is a prolific producer of learning resources on selling by phone. He authored the audio-tape training program, **“Ringin' Up Sales,”** published by Dartnell. His video program is **“Getting Through to Buyers . . . While the Others are Screened Out.”** He wrote the book, **“How to Sell More, In Less Time, With No Rejection, Using Common Sense Telephone Techniques--Volumes 1&2,”** and his most recent title, **“Telephone Tips That SELL!--501 How-to Ideas and Affirmations to Help You Get More Business By Phone.”**

Art's how-to ideas and tips appear regularly in the print and electronic media. He has written a regular column for “Teleprofessional” magazine for 10 years, also writes one for “Selling!” newsletter, and is frequently quoted in “Selling Power,” “Bottom Line Business,” “Sales and Marketing Management,” and numerous trade publications.

He holds the popular **Telesales Rep College** two-day public training seminars nationwide, and also customizes the program for on-site, in-house delivery. Art also delivers how-to programs on effective telesales ranging from one-hour to several days.

Clients include IBM, AT&T, Ameritech, Hewlett Packard, Norfolk Southern, Baxter Healthcare, and other companies and associations in virtually all business-to-

business industries.

His speaking and training reputation has been built as someone who knows what works and what doesn't in telesales because he's done it (corporate telesales positions with AT&T Long Lines and American Express), and still does it. He also conducts extensive research to customize his programs, listening to tapes of actual sales calls of client reps in order to learn the language of the industry, company, and strengths and weaknesses of sales reps and strategies.

Other Resources To Help You Get More Business By Phone

Free: The Tele-Sales Hot Tips Of The Week

Get more ideas from Art every week via email, free. Sign up, and see back issues free at <http://www.businessbyphone.com/backissues.htm>

'How To Sell More, In Less Time, With No Rejection, Using Common Sense Telephone Techniques'

Get over 500 pages of how-to tips on selling more by phone. See topics, details, a sample chapter, and an unheard-of guarantee. Go to <http://www.businessbyphone.com/cgi-bin/at.pl?a=272760>

Presented by:

Business by Phone, Inc.
<http://www.businessbyphone.com/>



Email Art Sobczak directly. [Click here. arts@businessbyphone.com](mailto:arts@businessbyphone.com)

Call us at (402)895-9399

Fax: (402)896-3353

Mail to:
Business By Phone Inc.
13254 Stevens St.
Omaha, NE 68137

ArcaMax Publishing Group
www.arcamax.com



Telephone: 888-272-2629

Fax: 757-369-6523

Mail to:
ArcaMax, Inc.
860 Omni Blvd., Suite C
Newport News, VA 23606

Special Report: The Top 10 Mistakes Made By Salespeople When Using The Phone, And What You Can Do To Avoid These Errors