LEVERAGE YOUR PREPARATION

by Linda Richardson

Preparing for a sales call, while it still takes discipline and time, has never been easier. Technology (CRMs, Google, other web resources) has dramatically reduced research time. The other side of the coin is that technology has made business more instantaneous and that has put more demand on salespeople's time.

Although preparing for a call can be done more quickly, preparation continues to be an area where many salespeople fall short in two ways: not preparing adequately, and then not leveraging their preparation to gain the full benefits of preparation from their clients.

Some salespeople wing it. Others prepare somewhat. But the best salespeople fully prepare. Of course, salespeople realize that they may not even use some or even all of what they prepare, but this is usually the exception, not the rule.

Preparing for the Call
Preparation allows you to maximize face or phone time with clients. It is the foundation for the call. Preparation provides you with a plan. The plan allows you to be ahead of the game so you can improve upon that plan during the call. You begin the dialogue as planned and then make it better vs. trying to develop what you are going to do on-the-spot. In a call, you as the Salesperson are like a film director. You have a plan to execute, but because you are so prepared you are ready to stumble on something and make your plan better.

To prepare there are SIX MUSTS:

- **Set a Call Objective —** Make it measurable in terms of the output you want and when you want to achieve it.
- **Plan to Connect —** Prepare to build rapport and connect with the client.
- **Develop your Questions/ Be Ready for Objections—** Prepare your questions starting with broader, more strategic questions. Anticipate client questions and objections.
- **Recommendation or Idea —** Organize your ideas or recommendations.
- **A Success Story —** Develop one relevant Success Story you can tell in under a minute.
- **Set a Measurable Action Step —** Create a clear action step/next step to ask for at the meeting.

To help you get credit for all of your preparation, refer to your preparation during the opening after you have built rapport and stated the purpose. Then concisely describe your preparation. For example, "In preparation for our meeting, I … (such as worked with our team to …), and am prepared to …" Making it clear you are prepared helps you earn points, build credibility, and often gain you more client time. Showing you are prepared also sets you up to transition to the Need Dialogue by saying, "Before I discuss …, I'd like to understand more about your …"

Preparation is the starting point. It not only improves your calls, it improves your relationships.

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