



Sales and Wasting Time

Be careful of time killers

The way that sales people utilize their time is critical to their success. Many sales people are simply ineffective time managers. Every minute of every day is essential to a sales person. Sales managers need to stress the importance of time and help their sales people understand how wasted time translates into lost sales.

Let's look at an example to clarify our point. Suppose the average face-to-face call lasts 15 minutes. And the average travel time between accounts is 30 minutes. We'll use an 8 hour day even though we believe an 8 hour day falls far short of acceptable in the sales game. Let's assume that on this day the full 8 hours is devoted to either travel or actual sales calls. We'll further assume that the rep is at the first prospect's doorstep at the beginning of the 8 hour period. In this 8 hour day, the rep would be able to make roughly 16 sales calls.

We know that sales is an imperfect art form and making 16 calls in this example is undoubtedly a stretch. We know that the rep will need to return phone calls and follow up on and resolve problems that might occur. These will consume some of the day which will further reduce the actual number of calls that get made. So let's say that on a good day the rep can make 10 calls.

Now let's complicate this scenario by introducing events or activities that tend to waste a sales person's time. Here's a list of our top ten time killers:

1. Poor routing through a territory increasing the average travel time between accounts.
2. Making a face-to-face contact to answer a question or resolve a minor customer issue when a phone call would have sufficed.
3. Doing administrative (non-selling) tasks such as paperwork during prime selling time.
4. Calling on non-decision makers.
5. Calling on prospects who will never buy anything or simply can't afford to buy from you.
6. Making too many calls to the same account or prospect.
7. Finding every reason possible not to make sales calls by doing make-work activities that yield no real return.
8. Leaving at the start of normal business hours from home or the office to drive to the first call and/or driving home or back to the office before putting in a full day in the field.
9. Preparing proposals during prime selling time.
10. Spending too much time with any given customer or prospect.

If a sales person engages in any or all of these activities, the number of calls that can be made is further reduced. In extreme cases, the sales person is doing more of these activities than actual selling activities. In many cases, a sales person is often not even aware they are doing one or more of these things and are chewing up significant chunks of time in non-selling activities.

The sales manager must act as a role model and mentor to help the sales person more effectively manage his/her time. Sales people need to understand clearly that time really is money and that selling is, in most cases, a matter of relationship development and maximizing the number of quality contacts made. Without enough time devoted to actual sales activities, it is difficult to achieve either.

Good luck and good selling!

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