

Is it a numbers game?

Question

Some of my colleagues say "It's a numbers game" whilst others say "If you go down that route you will lose the plot". Who's right?

Answer

Actually they both have a point. If you work with too many prospects, you may never build rapport with some because you only get around to them every six months, by which time they will have forgotten you. Likewise, if you call too often they may grow to hate you.

It's much easier to work backwards from how many deals you need to do. Using myself as an example, I need to work with about 20 clients at any one time - some give me business every month and some once or twice a year. For me to be talking to 20 clients, I need to call/visit about 60 every month. Some are ready to buy and are classified as 'A' class or hot prospects. Some are not ready to buy, even though we have a good conversation. I have spent months building rapport and confidence with 60. I know 5/6 will buy and so I eat that month. I also know that 5/6 will not be going anywhere because of budget problems.

So every month my 60 prospects drop to 50(ish) and therefore I call my suspects (those who buy what I sell but I have not spoken to yet). I have about 300 suspects to work with and when I call them I will find some have contracts with others and some are interested. It will take many weeks/months to cultivate them, but that's part of the process. So every month out of my 300 suspects, I find 10 that I can transfer into my portfolio of prospects.

So the easy answer is yes, it is a numbers game but if you have too many you may struggle and if you have too few then you probably push too hard and lose some who were quite keen. In my case the numbers are 300 suspects/60 prospects/20 clients.

I have someone in my team who needs 500 suspects to work with because of experience and another who needs 200 because of an excellent customer base.



With Peter Clayton
Sales Solutions

Peter runs courses in sales and sales management

Receptionists drive me mad

Question

Should I hate all receptionists or it is me who does not understand them?

Answer

There are a few I have spoken with over the years that I have thought "Come the revolution..."

I suppose the truth is that many receptionists get so many calls every week from salespeople with a poor approach. The trouble is, they mess it up for the rest of us.

So what is the best way to handle them? The best bit of advice is **Don't sound scripted!!** "I don't work from a script" I hear you say. The facts are simple - 95% don't work from a script and yet most sound as if they do. What happens is this - If you say the same introduction day in day out, it will not be many weeks before you sound slightly scripted. Your voice sounds a bit mechanical and the tone is ever so slightly higher than usual. It's enough for a receptionist (and a decision maker for that matter) to decide not to help

It is more down to how you say things, not what you say. That's why some sales people don't have problems getting help and information, whilst others seem to fall at the first hurdle.

One last thought on this. The average person talks at about 100 words per minute and thinks about 800 words per minute. When a sales person has been "hitting the phones" for an hour or so this can rise to 130 WPM talking and 1200 plus wpm thinking. This makes it difficult to balance what you're saying with what a receptionist is saying - hence we over-talk them or just talk at a different speed. Either way rapport/confidence is difficult to build.

Next month we will look at objections and how to avoid falling into a trap. If you would like to contact me I can be reached at

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