5 ways to
Sell more by Simply Listening

The traditional image of a salesperson is someone who is ‘tenacious and pushy’. This should be replaced with ‘patient and intelligent’ in today’s world of successful sales practices, as the internet is removing much of the gatekeeper power from salespeople and handing it to prospects via the increasing abundance of online knowledge.

With consumers discovering and researching your products online, asking friends and colleagues their opinions on social media and peer-to-peer websites and comparing your product to your competitors, the modern salesperson has to become an intelligent farmer, rather than a traditional hunter.

Such an approach may be a dramatic change for sales traditionalists, who may not be used to watching leads, but chasing them. However, traditional methods are rapidly becoming outdated in favour of a more effective sales process, which is built on the most underrated and underused tool – listening.

What’s in this ebook?

- Asking the right questions
- Being able to listen to prospects at any time
- Getting online material right
- Using your listened to data
- Knowing when to act
- Next steps

1. Ask the right questions

Being able to have the right contact between your salespeople and your prospects is vital. The most important aspect to acknowledge is that such contact should be a conversation first and a sales pitch second.

By avoiding an overly commercial approach and gently guiding a simple conversation, the prospect will enjoy speaking to your salespeople more. This takes advantage of the old adage, ‘people buy from people’ and allows prospects to disclose far more information to aid the sales pitch.

Follow these simple steps to ensure you get the most out of direct contact with prospects:

Step 1: Ask open ended questions

This is one of the oldest sales techniques, but is easily forgotten. Don’t allow a strict set of required prospect qualification questions inhibit your conversation style and if you have to know specific information such as product volumes or how they heard about your company, ensure these are delayed to later in the sales process or included in staged online forms.

Step 2: Be patient and get them to expand

When they are answering your questions, encourage them to speak for as long as they want to - the more they feel they’ve invested in the conversation, the more likely they are to buy from you and of course, you will be able to pick up far more information, which you can use to create a more targeted sales offer.

Step 3: Take notes

Whilst the prospect is responding, make a note of any emotive or powerful language. Use this to get them to expand on what they are saying, i.e. if they mention their sales are falling, ask them why they think they are falling.

Tips:

- Each prospect is different - some may be sceptical of directly talking to salespeople and therefore may take longer to start disclosing information openly - it should be left to the salesperson’s judgement when to stop probing in such situations.
- Ensure any information gained is not used in an overly commercial way. Marketing communications can make great use of the information salespeople pick up during initial contact, but ensure it is used in a sensitive way, not to affect the relationship you have with the prospect.
- Instead of segmenting prospects by value, you may want to segment your list by propensity to buy - this can then be used to prioritise your activities.

1. Ask the right questions

Step 4: Meet their needs, not your wants

The traditional approach will not let a prospect go without some sort of commitment, maybe for another call or meeting. Whilst this is a good approach, be intuitive to what the prospect really wants - if they want to go away and research their options a little more, let them. Make the direct interactions between your company and prospects as open as possible, prospects will be more likely to make repeated contact and if you are listening to their activity on your website, this will ensure the door is open to re-approach the conversation.

Step 5: Segment them into appropriate lists

Not all prospects are equal. Some will justify more time and monitoring than others due to value, so ensure you segment prospects into appropriate lists to manage resources in the most productive way. If you are able to set up automations in your Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Software, you will be able to easily define the number of alerts you receive based on prospects' potential value.

2. Be able to listen at any time

81% of people use their mobile device for research (Eloqua 2012) and the propensity of your prospects to act quickly whilst on their mobile device is almost as high. With such a dynamic and fast moving relationship between your prospects and company, your salespeople must go mobile in order to take advantage of changes in a prospect's interest.

This is especially vital if your key salespeople or account managers are off site regularly at events, meetings or if they have a long commute. If they are able to utilise their own mobile devices to keep track of prospects in real-time, they can react quickly to changes in prospects interest. If they don't, the danger is that the prospect will continue their research and communicate with a competitor's online resources, introducing competition for the sale.

Enabling your salespeople to do this on their mobile devices should be easy with a decent CRM system, which integrates with online tracking software. This can then be used to send various mobile alerts whilst updating the data on your CRM. Your out-of-office salespeople can then access your CRM via their smartphone or tablet devices, contacting prospects on the move if they feel the need to and updating the CRM data in real-time.

"70% of mobile searches lead to an action within one hour... 70% of desktop searches lead to an action within one month"

(Eloqua 2012)

3. The right material = happy prospects

You should be creating material that does two things - answers your visitor's critical questions and encourages repeat dialogue:

Answering questions

The consumer habit of researching possible purchases must be satisfied if your prospects are to seriously consider buying from you. At a base level, you should provide content which informs prospects about your product details, its basic advantages and the reasons why they should buy from you. But at a higher and more effective level, you should also attempt to provide more information on how your product can help them resolve the issues which motivated them to research products or services like yours.

The creation of such content can be based on the information you originally listened to and recorded in the first sales contact. By suggesting the solutions to the problems prospects are coming to you with or by providing complimentary literature around their route motivations, you are providing attractive content, which you can then use to track and listen to prospects.

Without such content, there is only so much you can learn about your prospects online behaviour. If you only provide the bear essential information on your website, then you will only know that a prospect is interested in buying. However, if you broaden your online resources to include a wide spectrum of prospect motivations and issues, you can tailor your sales approach far more effectively.

Getting repeat dialogue

Though investing in great content allows salespeople to listen to prospects more comprehensively, there should always be an encouragement for prospects to communicate with your sales team via various routes. This allows your content not only to act as a sales listening tool, but also to pull prospects towards your desired sales channels.

Tips:

- Imply within the content that there is more to learn by contacting your company directly. This should encourage contact with your company.
- Don't add content for the sole purpose of tracking prospects. Low quality content which prospects don't see as valuable can discourage prospects and will damage any sales relationship you have already built.

4. Using your listened to data

Prospects will react very badly to a sales call made at the wrong time or via the wrong medium, i.e. calls made to a prospect's mobile phone or a direct message via social media may be seen as too invasive.

To avoid these unwanted scenarios, you must use what you've learnt from listening to prospect behaviour to create a 'right touch strategy' - offering the right person the right product, at the right time, via the right medium.

This may seem like an impossible task, but you don't have to get it 100% right every time - you just need to increase your probability of getting it right the majority of the time, by using the data you've been listening to.

To start the process of using the data, pull a list of prospects who converted to sales and a list of those who didn't, then use your CRM to segment your data into the following categories:

Right person	Right product	Right time	Right medium
Example criteria: Job title **Questions to ask:** Is there a pattern in job title between the prospects that did and those that didn't convert into a sale? What are the recognised pressure points for contacts with this job title? What marketing content is popular?	Example criteria: Product or service type **Questions to ask:** Is there a pattern between the prospects that did and those that didn't convert into a sale and which product they were offered? Did the product match the needs of the prospects that didn't convert?	Example criteria: Day of the week or time they were contacted **Questions to ask:** Is there a pattern between the time of day and prospects that did and didn't convert into a sale? Is there a pattern in the day of the week?	Example criteria: Contacted on direct line or mobile phone **Questions to ask:** Is there a pattern between the contact method used and prospects that did and those that didn't convert into a sale? Is there a pattern in contact frequency?

Tips:

- Start with broad comparisons between successfully and unsuccessfully converted prospect lists and then refine your comparisons with increasing detail.
- Save the searches in your CRM to keep lists current, but with minimal work.
- Use filterable history feeds in your CRM to view a prospect's communications with your company at a glance.
- Actioning on such reports should be easy: it's simply a case of repeating best practice and cutting anything which isn't offering a positive ROI.

5. Act

Knowing when to be proactive in contacting prospects and when to carry on listening can be a hard balance to strike.

In fact, it will entirely depend on their journey as a prospect, which luckily you can measure and build an automated communication strategy to support.

The most important technique here is lead scoring - this is a process of allocating points to prospects which denote when they convert into leads, then being ready to contact via sales channels.

Inbound software will allow you to score your prospects automatically, based on online behaviour and should integrate with your CRM system to allow you to allocate points via offline mediums, such as calls, events and correspondence. Such methods allow you to tell precisely when a prospect is ready for direct sales contact, either for the first time or for a follow-up, giving you, as a salesperson, prospects who are anticipating your call.

An example of lead scoring

Scoring rules	4+ page visits = 10pts	Brochure download = 20pts	Social media activity = 10pts pitch is made.	**Resulting Action** None. You have a lead score of 50pts - prospect #1 has only reached 40pts.
Prospect #1 behaviour	Prospect visits 4 pages on your website	Prospect revisits your website and downloads a brochure	Prospect starts following your company on Twitter	

Scoring rules	4+ page visits = 10pts	Brochure download = 20pts	Price list download = 30pts	**Resulting Action** Contact to be made immediately via sales person - prospect #2 has reached 50pts.
Prospect #2 behaviour	Prospect visits 2 pages on your website	Prospect revisits your website and downloads a brochure	Prospect revisits your website and downloads your price list	

Tips:

- Based on prospect actions taken, use both smaller points scores, which may accumulate to a prospect turning into a lead over time, and larger scores to quickly convert prospects into leads.
- Setup multiple scoring systems, which cater for both customers and new prospects.
- Tailor your communications via splitting prospects into life stages, allowing you to effectively target those who have nearly converted and take a more relaxed, listening based approached to those with a lower lead score.

What next?

We hope you have found this ebook helpful in providing you with new ideas to enhance your sales process.

If you think your current CRM or business software isn't able to perform the tasks outlined in this ebook, why not **try Maximizer CRM for FREE**. Or if you'd like to discuss your requirements, call our friendly team of CRM experts on **+44 (0)845 555 99 55** or email **info@max.co.uk**.

Alternatively, you can use our other ebooks, watch free webcasts and read complimentary whitepapers - here's a few that might be helpful on this subject:

WEBCAST: 4 Steps to Higher Sales Conversion

EBOOK: 30 Lead Generation Tips, Tricks & Ideas

WHITE PAPER: Smarketing! How marketing automation drives sales success in this digital age

Free Trials

Try the latest Maximizer CRM for yourself with:

- ONLINE TEST DRIVE
- MOBILE TEST DRIVE
- 14 DAY TRIAL

Share with a colleague

Print