



# Seven Phone

# Prospecting Traps

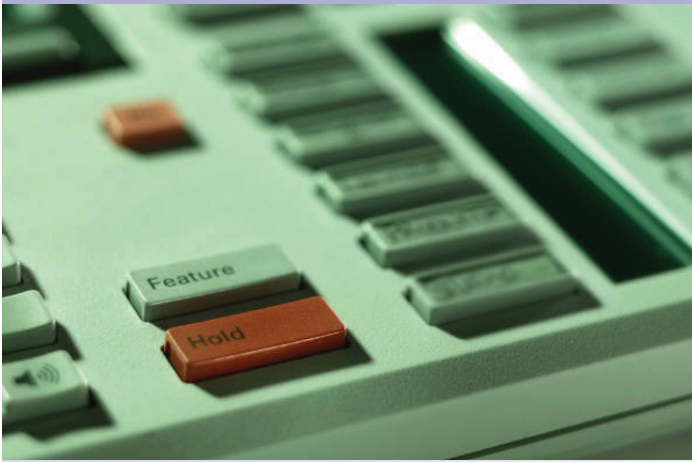
When speaking with prospects or customers during the sales process, by e-mail, social media or even the telephone, it is much more challenging to establish a business relationship without face-to-face time. Salespeople who lack the proper communication skills when they do speak over the phone may find themselves in one of several traps that break down any relationship you are trying to build. You'll find your sales efforts dead in the water because of the terrible impression you have made on a customer or prospect.

- **Trap #1: Not being personally accountable.** There's nothing more frustrating from a customer's perspective than to be transferred from one person to another. Would you like it if a salesperson did that to you? Don't pass the buck to somebody else in your firm; your customers want your personal skin in the game. Business owners get frustrated when they don't have a clear path on how to get answers. Customers and prospects feel a certain kinship with you and the company if you have done your job right, and to not be able to demonstrate that relationship on an ongoing basis can hurt you.
  - **Related:** *Not setting up the proper expectations to start building the relationship.* Make sure your customers have a clear understanding about what you can and can't do for them.
- **Trap #2: Failing to understand the customer's business.** Don't expect customers to answer questions for which you should already have answers. Conduct some pre-call contact research. Is the customer/prospect worthy of your time? Is the person you call the influencer? If so, how? Who does that person influence? What portion of the budget is under his or her realm of responsibility? How is the business affected by NOT using your service(s)? Who else should you be reaching out to? Who will be



a trusted ally in the target organization and ultimately value and support your efforts?

- **Related:** *Not asking the right types of strong (open & closed for example) questions to allow the customer to talk and not being open to listening.* Questions give you a clear idea of a customer's needs and desires. Know when to keep your mouth shut and listen. Listening to your clients is one of the most valuable weapons in your business arsenal. Whether in a face-to-face meeting with a prospective client or having a phone meeting; listening provides strategic and tactical information that can be incredibly important in shaping the future of your business.



## Customers want you to communicate with them meaningfully and clearly in a way that works for them.

- **Trap #3: Being an adversary, not an ally.** Since customers are risking their career doing business with you, they expect you to represent their best interests. Your reputation depends on your ability to be a trusted ally for your customer.
    - **Related:** *Not asking the right questions to determine their interests so that you can be that ally and not a voice!* Salespeople must know their customers' needs in order to bring value to the sales process. Find out what challenges they are facing in their business arena, learn what their goals are and be aware of how you can help them to be successful through the service(s) that you provide.
  - **Trap #4: Selling products, not solutions.** Don't burden customers with features; tell them how your solution will help their business. Many salespeople think the phrase "What this can do for you ..." is the same as providing a benefit statement. But this does not convey a customer's challenges, needs or business goals. A feature is not a benefit unless you have identified a customer need (or a problem) and the feature satisfies that need or solves a problem. Satisfying customer needs may be Sales 101, yet it is crucial for salespeople to keep that concept in mind as they interact with Customer 2.0, an informed participant who has his own ideas about what and how he expects to purchase.
    - **Related:** *Not identifying the problem so you can match a solution because you didn't discuss the*
- customer's business first.* Forget about your features and talk to your customers often. Talking to customers gives you the opportunity to enhance services provided to them. These opportunities can often fall in your lap by maintaining a dialogue with customers.
- **Trap #5: Being inaccessible when needed.** If customers are important to you, you'll respond to their e-mails or voice mails within minutes, not hours. Business owners get very frustrated when they cannot reach their salesperson in a timely manner. Time is money.
    - **Related:** *Not using the customer's preferred method of communication, and not encouraging phone conversations to avoid misunderstandings.* Customers appreciate when a salesperson reaches them the way they would like to be reached. Some people like to use e-mail to conduct business (it could be they are likely to quickly respond to an e-mail, or like to have a written record of a conversation), some will respond to a text message, while others are fine with a phone call (or voice mail). No matter the preference, customers want you to communicate with them meaningfully and clearly in a way that works for them. Sometimes that means having a phone conversation to be clear on any issues that may arise. Set this up ahead of time and you'll avoid any mis- (or missed) communication!
  - **Trap #6: Selling rather than helping.** Customers want you to be thinking about how to help their business, not how to convince them to buy your products/



services. Do you want to be regarded as a trusted resource for a customer, or another pushy salesperson that could care less about your customer's needs?

- o **Related:** Talking way too much about you and your product/service. Stop talking. Listen! Give a prospect/customer the *opportunity* to make his/her needs known so that you can provide the appropriate solutions.
- **Trap #7: Wasting the customer's time.** Respect your customer's time. Set an agenda for your call to make the most of the time available and stay on topic. Don't waste time pitching a product/service that is not desired or needed, or any other irrelevant information. If your solution isn't the right choice for the customer, say so. Be willing to accept "no" for an answer. Perhaps the customer is not ready to purchase at this time.
  - o **Related:** *Not listening to the customer's verbal clues.* You can't hear what the customer wants if you are not focusing on *what* the customer says. Without any non-verbal cues to gauge, you need

to pay attention. To stay competitive and relevant to the clients we serve we must be able to tune out the distractions that we face and actively focus on listening.

Acquiring and retaining customers requires salespeople to listen carefully, particularly if it is over the phone, understand the customer's business needs and provide solutions that add value. Companies who would like long-term customers need to avoid the seven deadly sins that would hinder any possibility of establishing productive relationships.

## Seven Prospecting Traps

1. Not being accountable
2. Failing to understand customer's business
3. Being an adversary, not an ally
4. Selling products, not solutions
5. Being inaccessible when needed
6. Selling rather than helping
7. Wasting the customer's time



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**Kathy Pabst Robshaw** is the principal of Telephone Effectiveness Company (TEC), a provider of effective and planned communications which have been proven to radically improve performance and build world class organizations. Her broad background in lead generation, dynamic personality and diverse skill set make her a trusted advisor able to incorporate her communications concepts in some of the most challenging business environments. Contact us to get strategies and processes that will get you desired results from your customers.

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