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WHITEPAPER

How to Overcome Prospecting Mistakes and Increase Your Sales Pipeline



We have all heard the saying, “If selling was easy, everyone would be doing it.” This phrase rings true for two reasons.

- The incredible income potential that comes from commission-based selling incentivizes many people to try this career path.
- Selling really isn’t easy! While many obstacles present themselves for novice and seasoned sellers alike, both can agree they have roadblocks around prospecting.

The prospecting landscape is littered with pitfalls and traps that claim many sellers. If you’re not careful, you may succumb to them as well. However, Sandler has developed a Success Triangle to help navigate this rocky terrain. To fully realize the power of this tool, you must understand each of the three components involved, and how they connect to one another.





Behavior

Behavior is often seen as one's blueprint for success in the sales world. Seems pretty straightforward, right? It can be, but first you must get past three limiting mistakes.

Behavior Mistake 1

Not maintaining proper schedule orientation.

Successful salespeople maintain a proper schedule orientation. Time blocking is a time-management concept that allows you accomplish your daily and weekly tasks, and make progress on your goals. When you block out time on your calendar, you follow through, no matter the task at hand. A way to visualize this is to consider how you treat your time with clients, versus the time you allot for yourself. If you have poor schedule orientation, you may allow interruptions and distractions to hinder personal efforts when you would never let them interrupt a client meeting.

If you maintain proper schedule orientation, you do not allow distractions to interrupt your prospecting time, just as you would treat your time with your most valued client. There's a big difference between scheduling time on your calendar and following through during the allocated time. This mistake commonly occurs because of a lack of discipline or focus. By dedicating yourself to your work and your objectives during a specific block of time, you greatly reduce your risk of succumbing to poor schedule orientation.

Behavior Mistake 2

Not having a goal for meaningful conversations.

Too often, meetings come to pass without accomplishing their purpose. When you sit down with a prospect, you should have a goal in mind, and make meaningful progress in every conversation. These conversations should take place with decision makers, and your goal should be for them to enact a purchase decision.

Don't be afraid to spend some time getting to know each other. Bonding, building rapport, and strengthening the relationship with your client or prospect is extremely important in the long term. However, that cannot be the only thing accomplished on the call. Every call should have an agenda and an outcome. For example, if the agenda is to get to know each other and see if there is a fit, then decide to set a follow-up call or part ways at the end based on your conversation.

Behavior Mistake 3

Not placing importance on booking first time appointments.

When you're paid commission, it's sometimes more satisfying to call a big current client than open a conversation with a new prospect that may or may not lead to business. While both are integral parts of becoming a successful seller, typically, if you don't pursue new business, your total book of business will stall or start to shrink. By placing importance on booking first-time appointments with new prospects, you're helping your business more than if you were only focusing on clients that already exist in your spectrum because new business brings new referrals, opportunities, and information to your pipeline.

As sales veterans and novices alike will tell you, selling is hard work. You must do many things the right way, and limit the mistakes you make if you wish to be successful, and your weekly behavior is no exception. While difficult, if you can maintain proper schedule orientation, focus on meaningful conversations, and set new appointments, you'll greatly increase your odds of success.



Attitude

Success resides between your ears. It's how you look at the world. Attitude is one's belief system and determines how you act and that ultimately affects your results. Just like with behavior, it's very easy to have a clouded view of your attitude and actions if you're not diligent with your process. There are several common mental traps that salespeople fall into when engaging in prospecting activities.

Attitude Trap 1

Having a scarcity mindset and not turning the 'gumball machine,' enough.

You're going to have to dig into your imaginative side for this one. Form a mental image of a gumball machine – just like one you'd see in an arcade or toy store. The globe is filled with red, blue, green, yellow, and purple candies. You want green gumballs because they're your favorite flavor. You turn the handle once, and a red gumball pops out. You give it to your little brother. You turn it again, and a purple one comes out. You throw that one away. Yet you still turn it again, knowing there's a green one coming soon. The green gumball pops out on the third try, you throw it in your mouth and enjoy.

The world of prospecting can work just like this gumball machine. If your ideal prospects are green gumballs, keep turning the handle until they come out. The more you prospect, the more chances you have at achieving an ideal prospect. Yet, you know everyone you engage with isn't going to be a green gumball. For this gumball theory to work for you, you will need to know what an ideal prospect looks like in your business. What is your green gumball? If prospects don't work out, just turn the handle again and wait for your green gumball to pop out.

Attitude Trap 2

Believing you're not worthy of your clients' time.

Successful selling has a lot to do with a positive mindset. If you feel inferior or as if you're going to waste your clients' time, you probably will. Before you can be of value to your clients or prospects, you must know your own worth.

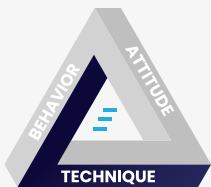
Think back to the goods or services you provide – have they been beneficial to clients in the past? If so, take to heart that you add value to those you engage with. Knowing this can both protect your attitude and self-esteem. You have equal business stature with your buyer. Don't be intimidated by a CEO – you also deserve to talk to the highest-ranking person in the buyer side regardless of your title.

Attitude Trap 3

Letting your ego alter your decision making.

Before entering into a meeting with a client or prospect, check yourself. Don't try to show your audience how smart you are by dominating the conversation. Ask questions and discover their pain points before you save the day.

Ego doesn't only adversely affect you by bolstering your confidence. Alternatively, some individuals don't want to prospect because they're insecure and afraid of embarrassing themselves in front of prospects. It's important to understand that this is part of the process. You will make mistakes the more you prospect – it's only natural. Don't let your ego get in the way of your dedication to prospecting.



Technique

If behavior and attitude are the blueprint and belief system that sellers exist in, then technique is how they go about their business. Technique is what you say and how you do it. The actions and words you use to have a positive outcome. Although governed by different rules, poor discipline when it comes to technique can have just as many negative effects as bad behavior and attitude.

Improper Technique 1

Being unfamiliar with your talk tracks.

Salespeople should have a few things down pat, one of them being talk tracks. These are the words and phrases you use in a specific situation. You should be able to jump to the correct talk track at a moment's notice, regardless of the scenario, and this goes beyond explaining the background of your company. You should have pre-determined language to help you overcome objections and lead towards purchase decisions with any client or prospect.

Improper Technique 2

Being unprepared for sales calls.

A call that starts well tends to end well. Productive sales conversations are predicated upon participation from both sides. As soon as you engage with a prospect, you want to cover the purpose of the meeting and verify how you will proceed with the expected duration of your time together. As soon as that has been established, layout the groundwork of your call and the topics you wish to cover. This will allow you to be sure you get through everything you wanted and will give your target the ability to know why you're heading down the conversational paths that you do.

Improper Technique 3

Failing to uncover pain.

The quickest way to facilitate your clients' needs is to uncover their pain points and provide solutions. Conversely, if you fail to realize what those pain points are, you're doomed to struggle from the start. If you struggle to enter into these conversations with your clients or prospects, imagine yourself as the "doctor of sales." You need to ask good questions of your patients (clients) to determine what ails them. Never prescribe a solution before you completely understand the symptoms.

The three components – behavior, attitude, technique – as mentioned are the foundation of the Sandler® Success Triangle, but they aren't the only contributors. Each of the three sides are connected to one another through specific methods.



COMMITMENT connects behavior and attitude.

This connection relates to maintaining loyalty to your cause in the face of adversity. Determine what drives you to be successful, and continue to remind yourself of this as you navigate the ups and downs of a sales career.



CONVICTION connects attitude and technique.

This is the decision to set your feet in stone and not budge unless the position is mutually beneficial for you and the client. Before engaging in the selling process with anyone, determine what you are and aren't willing to compromise on.



CONSISTENCY connects technique and behavior.

This is the regular conformity to a plan that you have designed and are implementing. Another way of saying this would be "practice makes perfect," but this extends deeper than just going through the motions. You must believe wholeheartedly in your process and maintain it with passion to be truly successful.

Prospecting can be a daunting task for any seller, but it's an imperative if you want your career to grow and develop at the highest level. By following the Sandler® Success Triangle and maintaining proper habits surrounding your behaviors, attitudes, and techniques, you can avoid traps that the average seller may fall into.

To enjoy even more success, incorporate a mastery of commitment, conviction, and consistency, and you'll be well on your way to redefining the way you add prospects to your funnel.





About Sandler

Sandler is the worldwide leader in sales, management, and customer service training. We partner with organizations of all sizes, across all industries, to help them improve their revenue performance. Sandler not only provides the initial and advanced strategies and tactics needed to excel, but we also empower your team to develop the attitudes and implement the behavior necessary to reach the highest levels of success.

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