FYI for your information

What Makes a Sales Call Successful?

High quota sales performers accomplish 20 percent more sales-related activities—such as asking questions and presenting benefits—per sales call than do low performers, yet they spend no additional time with their customers.

This is one finding of an extensive study conducted recently by Xerox Learning Systems and reported on by Michael Radick in the organization's *XCHANGE* newsletter. The study employed a team of professionally trained observers who monitored and analyzed more than 500 sales calls. A computer was used to analyze and correlate the half-million pieces of information collected by the observation team.

The newsletter reports findings in four major areas: the efficient use of time, customer needs, customer attitudes and closing a sale.

Regarding the use of time, the study found that successful sales calls involved more interaction on the parts of both the customer and the salesperson. Yet, the average successful call lasted only 33 minutes. The successful salesperson spent time questioning the customer; however, calls that did not progress beyond the questioning stage were not likely to succeed. It was the salesperson's ability to uncover customer needs through questioning that led the call to a successful outcome.

Ironically, the study determined that uncovering a large number of customer needs did not necessarily lead to a successful outcome. Rather, uncovering an average of slightly more than two customer needs was found to be a good predictor that a call would result in success. The call's success was directly related to the salesperson's ability to respond to uncovered needs with benefits that met those needs.

In regard to customer attitudes, the research showed that successful sales calls contained more than twice as many statements of customer acceptance as failed calls contained. Surprisingly, the presence of customer objection in a sales call was not necessarily a bad sign. The study determined that objections signaled frank, open communication and contributed positively to the call's outcome when handled properly. In fact, successful calls contained almost 50 percent more objections than did failed calls. Likewise, calls that contained statements of customer skepticism were likely to be more successful than were calls without skepticism. The customer attitude that tended to predict failure was indifference.

In closing the sale, the Xerox study found that success is associated with an alertness to early closing opportunities. The most successful closes were those involving a summary of the benefits accepted during the call, combined with an action plan requiring customer commitment.

Does Your Organization Need a Career Library?

Traditional succession planning can be risky. It helps the organization plan for the future but risks overlooking the needs of the individual. As a result, managers can be promoted to positions that dissatisfy them and decrease their productivity.

A tool that helps both parties to succession planning—the potential candidate for promotion and those who make selection decisions—is a career library. A library of corporate career information can show managers where they are logically headed now, where they could go and where they ought to go. And the library can help decision makers plan by seeing the entire spectrum of positions and candidates carefully organized in one place.

Here are some tips for establishing and maintaining a successful management career library.

• *Create a career path matrix.* Take all the jobs in your organization and divide them vertically into groups, for example, retail, general services, engineering and administrative support. Subdivide the groups into activities: In the retail group, for example, activities might include sales, sales assistance, advertising and display. Then organize activities into families: Families in the sales activity might include technical sales, big ticket item sales and non-commission sales.

Next, indicate horizontal "bands of accountability," the different levels of responsibility that generally range from entry-level management trainee, to middle management, to executive-level management. In the squares that you have created, insert the position, or positions, that apply to that category.

Now managers can see at a glance what the key job is in any area. Managers will know what they can expect if they continue on the same career course and what they will be striving for if they switch career courses. At the same time, top management can clearly see who are the succession candidates, and they can determine if those candidates are, or ever will be, ready for those positions.

• *Analyze and index jobs.* Job titles aren't enough. Managers must also know what it takes to earn them. To that end, analyze each job according to its technical functions (what must be done on the job) and motivational requirements (what kind of person is capable of performing those functions, e.g., able to adapt to pressure or make decisions).

Each job analysis should be noted on a card or sheet and placed in your library with the career path matrix. Between the two aids, managers can determine where they fit in now and where they are going.

• *Lay the ground rules.* The success of the career path system depends on the support it gets from top management, specifically in policies that ensure managerial mobility.

How will managers bid for jobs? It is unfair to open a world of career possibilities to managers only to shut it by failing to inform them of vacant positions. Will you post open positions on the company bulletin board or publish them in your newsletter? How long will managers be given to apply before the job is opened to outsiders?

How will managers be assessed? You've analyzed jobs; now how will you analyze the people who seek them? Will you use the services of an assessment center or allow self-assessment? If you use self-assessment, will it be done under the supervision of a third-party professional, that is, a career counselor? If a manager has been assessed as unfit for a position, will he or she be allowed a second assessment? When?

Will you offer training? Armed with an assessment of himself or herself as well as knowledge of relevant jobs, a manager may discover that he or she has the personal qualities needed to succeed in a job in a different area, but lacks the technical skills. That manager needs training, and the company must determine in advance whether or not it will supply that training.

A clearly stated policy diminishes the chance of a misunderstanding between managers and "management."

—Submitted by Felix E. Lopez
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What Secretaries Say About Office Automation

"Word processing is not a monolithic phenomenon that bodes either all evil or all good for all secretaries. Some will profit enormously by automation while others will suffer greatly."

"Productivity depends on two things: how much time is spent doing a particular task and how important that task is to achieving the mission of the office."

"What people did historically to keep power away from other people was to keep information away from them. The computer is passing this knowledge throughout society, to the extent that now anyone with the courage to learn the computer can gain greater power within an organization."

These were among the points raised by participants at Secretary Speakout '83: The Professional Secretary's New Identity in the Information Age. The event was sponsored by the Research and Educational Foundation of Professional Secretaries International (formerly The National Secretaries Association) March 9-11 in Boston.

Speakers and panelists addressed such issues as successful and unsuccessful implementations of office automation; the secretary's role in evaluating and recommending equipment; the restructuring of jobs mandated by office automation; new career paths for office professionals; technological discrimination; health and safety implications of the new office technology; office politics; and possible future developments in computer technology.

A 20-page digest of the two-and-one-half-day symposium, including excerpts of speeches, panel presentations and question-and-answer sessions is available. Send $2.00 for postage and handling to Professional Secretaries International, 2440 Pershing Road G-10, Kansas City, MO 64108.

If Computer-Based Training Married Data Processing Training . . .

Would it be called CBDPT? This was not among the questions posed in a survey of data processing training managers, designers and coordinators attending *Data Training*'s Computer-Based Training Conference in Boston last April.

The questions asked did generate some interesting data about the use of computer-based training (CBT) in DP training, however. Of the 50 percent of 300 respondents who said they currently use CBT:

• Fifty-five percent usually author CBT programs in-house; 38 percent usually buy packaged courses; and seven percent regularly purchase custom-designed courses.

• Thirty-three percent use CBT in data processing technical training; 19 percent use the technique to train non-DP employees in computer concepts; and 11 percent use it for non-DP technical training (such as electronics) and for training administrative procedures. Smaller groups use CBT in customer education, sales, management/supervisory and financial training.

• Sixty-two percent train up to 500 people per year using CBT, while 27 percent train between 500 and 2,500. Seven percent use the technique to train up to 5,000 people per year; three percent train as many as 5,000 to 50,000 via CBT.

Of the 150 respondents not currently using computer-based training, 98 percent said they plan to use it, 43 percent within the next six months and an additional 25 percent within the next year.

The Voice of Success

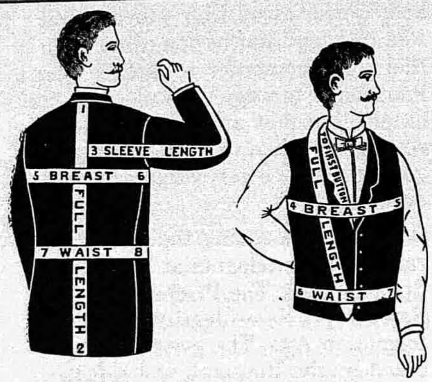
A mere seven percent of oral communication is in the verbal content, the actual message of the words. Approximately 38 percent consists of the vocal elements (voice tone, pitch, inflection, rate and volume), and the remaining 55 percent is composed of the visual elements (appearance, eye contact and body language). This is according to Marie Moran, president of Impact Training Associates, Los Angeles.

A former professional vocalist, Moran specializes in training in the effective use of the voice and in total communication through personal presence, body language, appearance and movement.

If there is a conflict between the meaning of the spoken word and the speaker's voice tone or facial expression, listeners normally discount the verbal and believe the vocal and visual, says Moran. She calls this kind of mixed message "noise" on the communication channel, interference that sabotages the meaning of the intended communication.

Here is a list of some potential sources of "noise" and the approaches Moran takes to correct them. They may be useful in communications training sessions, executive development programs or other settings in which you are asked to help staff speak more effectively.

- An angry person tends to have a tight jaw and hold a lot of tension. By learning to relax the jaw, the speaker resonates and articulates better (and in the process loses some of the covert hostility causing the tension).
- Low risk-takers have monotonous voice tones. Learning to breathe properly gives them more energy control and confidence.
- Shy people hold back facial expressions, are tight-mouthed and have flat, nasal voices. Shyness is eased by learning to project and place one's voice, as in the case of one of Moran's clients, a grown woman with a tiny, little-girl voice. The woman's voice developed dramatically after she learned to project from the diaphragm.
- Analytical people such as engineers and financial executives often do not move naturally and freely when they speak. Instead, they tend to sway back and forth in a tense, monotonous manner. Improved vocal confidence frees their energy and ability to relate physically to an audience.
- High-energy, expressive people who work and move fast are outgoing but cannot harness energy effectively in oral communication. Learning deep breathing and conscious, comfortable eye contact, body movement and creative pauses lets them slow down and control runaway thoughts.
- Amiable people who do not appear to be assertive or authoritative speak in soft voices, moving and breathing "lazily." Breathing and vocal exercises build more resonant, powerful delivery.



The Trainer's New Cloze

If your training program contains a significant amount of reading material, you may want to use the cloze assessment method to screen the material's appropriateness for your trainees. Cloze has been used primarily in educational settings for 30 years. It can function as a screening tool, a pre-test or post-test instrument or a validation test measuring learning based on your most important content. It is especially useful in grouping trainees according to their abilities and needs.

The accompanying passage is considered essential information in a bank teller training program. Try to fill in the blanks with words you think make the most sense. This passage is a brief example of cloze assessment, shorter than is normally used; to ensure test validity a passage of at least 500 words is needed. The passage has been clozed by deleting approximately every tenth word.

Based on the score of exact word answers in the blank spaces, a comprehension level can be assessed for groups and individuals. This comprehension level is a measure of understanding of the source material, and it has direct implications for the way a trainer can work best with trainees.

Independent level trainees score above 70 percent on the cloze. On a pre-test, a score at this level means that the reader already understands the training content well, or will be able to understand it well. On a post-test, it means that the reader comprehends the material and is familiar with the main ideas of the training program.

Instructional level trainees score between 40 and 70 percent. Readers who score at this level on a pre-test can understand the material with timely help on special vocabulary and important terms found in the training program. Those who score at this level on a post-test still suffer gaps in comprehension and need follow-up instruction and monitoring.

Frustration level trainees score below 40 percent. They do not comprehend the material they are reading. Those who score at this level on a pre-test may be able to handle the course content, but it would be unfair to assign reading material that is similar in difficulty to the clozed content. Intervention is necessary, and other methods of instruction may be needed.

One of the major benefits of cloze assessment is that you can assess trainees during the first hour of the training program using your most important training content. With cloze, you need not wait until the middle or end of a training program to discover the individuals who will have a hard time with the reading material.

Cloze comprehension levels and percentages correlate at a very high level with multiple choice and other standard tests.

Cloze Passage: Requirements for Negotiability

A check must meet six requirements to qualify as 1 ____________. First, it must have a current date, not post-dated or 2 ____________. Second, the words of negotiability PAY TO THE ORDER 3 ____________ must be present. Third, a specific payee must be 4 ____________ (or the instrument can be made out to 5 ____________). Fourth, the dollar amount and the written amount must 6 ____________. Fifth, the drawee bank must be named. Last, the 7 ____________ must be signed by the maker. As a teller, 8 ____________ must verify these six requirements before accepting checks for 9 ____________ or cash. Caution and judgment must be exercised in 10 ____________ whether to give a customer immediate use of uncollected funds.

Answer Key

1. negotiable 2. incorrect 3. OF 4. named
5. cash 6. agree 7. check 8. you
9. deposit 10. deciding

Send all items of interest for FYI to Elizabeth Lean, Training and Development Journal, *Suite 305, 600 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20024.*