

Mr. Inside Sales

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WHITE PAPER:

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10 Techniques to Instantly
Make Your Sales Team Better



According to CEOInsights.com, over 48% of sales companies surveyed reported that they missed their monthly revenues goals more times in a 12-month cycle than they reached them. Other sales indicators like time on the phone, closing ratios, percentage to monthly goal, etc, pipeline accuracy inevitably suffered as well as sales teams struggle to make quota and reach revenue.

In addition to missing revenue numbers, many other companies indicate that the level of training, core selling skills, and overall selling talent of their sales team could be improved as well. When asked how many companies have a defined sales process in place and a specific training program to reinforce and teach those best practices, our experience tells us that less than 35% of companies have these processes in place.

While you would expect an under trained sales team to lead to under performance, what is rarely considered is what toll this takes on other factors that contribute to sales decline. Getting rejected and repeatedly missing sales lead to a lack of confidence which in turn leads to call reluctance. Getting beaten up for missing quotas leads to poor attitudes and these attitudes spread rapidly throughout a sales organization creating an environment that becomes toxic and self perpetuating.

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Is Sales Training Enough?

All companies have some form of sales training, even if it just consists of new reps shadowing senior reps for a few days before they hit the phones. While sales training can be graded from bad to great, there are some important points you should consider when designing your own sales training:

- 1) Make yours not only specific to your product or service, but break your training down to correspond to your sales cycle and teach best practices for each part.** For example, if your first call is simply to set an appointment or send information to a prospect, what are the five benchmarks your reps need to cover for you to consider this a qualified lead?

Having this kind of clarity all the way through your sales cycle will help not only your reps but will help your manager coach all the way through the sale.

- 2) Give your reps specific, scripted responses to the sales situations they run into every day.** This is the best way to empower your reps and it helps them successfully navigate the sale from beginning (getting through the gatekeeper) through to the end (getting the deal in the door).

An example would be to script out and teach them how to overcome the smokescreen objection of, “I have to show this to my boss” objection. Most sales reps don’t know how to deal with this objection so their usual response is something along the lines of, “OK, when should I get back with you?”

This simply leads to non-qualified leads that clog up pipelines.

A specific, scripted approach to this objection will teach your reps to

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isolate this objection to see if it's a smokescreen or a real objection. Have them use something like this: "I understand and I think you should speak to _____. Just out of curiosity, if they say to do whatever you think is best, where are you leaning in regards to using this?"

Again, giving your reps specific tools to navigate through the sale is what is going to help them become successful.

- 3) Make sales training a daily event.** To learn a new skill of any kind you need to reinforce it daily. We recommend running a brief sales meeting every morning to reinforce the skills and techniques that your top 20% are using successfully. Playing recordings, role playing, passing out updated scripts are all things that will help your team improve on a daily, weekly basis.

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Specific Sales Solutions

In alignment with the suggestions above, here are ten specific sales solutions that you can adapt and implement to immediately make your inside sales team more effective. These are proven skills that will help your team navigate past some of the common objections, brush offs and put offs they encounter on a daily basis. You can use these techniques as sales meeting topics and have your team help to customize them to fit their selling situations.

#1 - How to Avoid the 3 Biggest Cold Calling Mistakes

I hear it over and over again – 80% of your competition insist on making their jobs harder because they keep making three major mistakes every time they cold call.

The good news is that there are easy ways to avoid them, and I'm going to share them with you right now:

Mistake No. 1: Not Using Instructional Statements.

When the secretary or receptionist asks your name or why you are calling or who you're calling with, you must not only give them the information, but you must end with an instructional statement. Use:

“Yes, please tell them Mike Brooks is holding please”

Use this instructional statement, and you will begin breezing past screeners and gatekeepers, and you'll avoid 80% of the screening you're getting now.

Mistake No. 2: Repeating an objection.

“Oh, you're not interested?”

“You don't have the money?”

“He's not available?”

Sounds basic, but 80% of your competition unconsciously repeat the objections they get. How to avoid this? Be prepared for the common brush-offs you get by writing and using effective Initial Resistance Scripts.

The Top 20% are prepared for these and easily overcome them earning the

right to present their product or service. For Word for Word scripts invest in my "Comprehensive Top 20% Instruction Manual," found on my website: www.MrInsideSales.com

Mistake No. 3: Not Questioning the Red Flags.

Oftentimes your prospects will reveal objections that will show up later on and kill the deal. These "Red Flags" often get by 80% of your competition, and they let them slide hoping they don't come up again.

The Top 20%, however, know they always do come up again so they qualify them as they come up. Use the scripts listed in Tip #2 to deal with Red Flags

If you use the techniques listed above, you'll avoid the 3 biggest mistakes 80% of your competition is making. You'll also save time and energy and get out better leads which will result in more deals.

#2 - Question the Red Flags

One of the best ways to determine who actually does make it into your sales cylinder is to make sure you avoid one of the biggest mistakes 80% of salespeople make when qualifying. And that is to overlook or not react to obvious Red Flags prospects give during the initial qualifying call.

In their haste or desperation to "generate a lead" or to "fill their pipeline," most sales reps will hope that any possible objection they hear on the front end will miraculously go away once the prospect sees their information or product or service, etc.

But you all know from experience -- it never does.

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In fact, the rule for calling back leads is that:

Leads Never Get Better!

What appears to be an objection or deal killer on the front end, always is.

A sales rep told me about a prospect who wasn't calling him back, and who (once he did reach him) told him that he was leaving the company. He wrote to me and said, "I guess intuitively I knew he wasn't the right guy to make the decision anyway."

And I'll bet he intuitively knew this because he heard (but didn't question) the Red Flags the prospect raised during the qualification call.

You can't ignore these Red Flags! Do what the Top 20% do: As soon as you hear something that triggers your intuition or that gives you that sick feeling in your gut, stop and ask the tough qualifying questions!

Here are some examples you can begin using today:

If someone says that they usually buy from _____, but would like to see your information, ask:

"Why would you switch vendors?"

Or

"How many other companies have you looked at in the last six months?"

And then:

"And how many did you go with?"

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If someone says that they will pass your information on to _____, say:

“Thanks. So that I make sure I'm not wasting her time it's best that I speak with her for just a few minutes. Can you please tell her that (your name) is holding please?” (If you're then told they are not available, make sure and get their direct line or that person's extension and keep calling until she picks up.

If someone says that they'd be glad to look it over, ask:

“Great, after you do, and if you think that it can help you (or your business, etc.), when would you move on it?”

And so on.

Trust me, if you want to close like the Top 20% then you have to start questioning the Red Flags.

Remember: It's better to disqualify the non buyers early rather than to spend your time and energy chasing and pitching people who are never going to buy.

Plus it means that you have more time to find real buyers.

So this week, write up questions to the Red Flags you currently get and begin using them! You'll feel so much stronger as a closer, and you'll begin making more money. Believe me, it's a win/win.

#3 Use Layering Questions

First, for those of you who have seen me live, you know that I am big on questioning your prospects during the qualification stage. As I've said -- they have all the answers as to why they'll buy or not buy, and it is your job to get them to tell you.

While asking questions is certainly a good start, you'll get the most thorough and complete information if you use layering questions.

Layering questions are simply questions that go a little deeper into an area or concern so that you get to the root of what really drives your prospect.

An example of a layering question goes like this:

“Who are you going to be speaking with about this decision?”
(Assumptive question)

And when they say their spouse, you then layer the question by asking –

“And what do they think you should do about this?”

Knowing this kind of information gives you the edge when it's time to close. And layering questions are exactly what you use to get it.

Layering questions are effective, powerful and easy to ask. Yet 80% of sales reps never use them. The Top 20%, on the other hand, know their value and ask them all the time. It's part of what makes them the Top 20%.

Examples of other layering questions you can use:

“If you decide to move on this investment, how much would you put into it?”

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Layering question:

"And is that money liquid now or would you have to move something around?"

Another

"I'll get this quote off to you today, and I'll follow up with you tomorrow at 10 o'clock – would that work?"

Layering question:

"Assuming you like it, what is the next step?"

I'm sure you see how this goes, so take a few minutes now and write some of your own. And then use them!

#4 The 5 Elements of a Qualified Lead

People ask me all the time what I think makes up a qualified lead. It's simple, I tell them. There are five things that every Top 20% producer knows when he or she hangs up the phone with a prospect.

Know these five things and chances are real good you're going to close this prospect. Leave one out -- or two out -- and chances are even better that you're never going to close this prospect.

It's a simple as that.

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Here are the five things you need to know about every prospect you speak with:

1) Decision maker and decision process. When speaking with your prospect, you need to be real clear on whether or not they are the sole decision maker, or who else is involved. Are there more than two involved in the final decision?

Also, what is the decision process like? What's involved? Who's in charge? If you're not absolutely clear on this when you get off the phone, you don't have a qualified lead.

2) Time frame. Part of knowing who and how the decision is made also involves knowing the time frame for making the decision. You must be clear on when they need your product or service, what type of urgency there is (if any), and when they are making the final decision.

Moreover, after getting this information, you need to be clear about what needs to happen next.

#3) Other quotes. You also need to know what other quotes, products, solutions, or options your prospect is considering. If they have a regular vendor and are getting other bids, you especially need to know:

How many other bids are they getting?

Why they are looking for other bids? (Do they just need to get to other bids before going with last year's vendor?)

What are they looking for in another bid/product/solution?

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What will make yours the one they choose?

#4) Buying motives (needs and wants). It is crucial for you to have a clear understanding of what is truly motivating your prospect to buy. Only when you know this will you be able to pitch to their listening. You must be able to answer these questions.

- What exactly is the prospect looking for?
- What are their unique buying motives?
- What do you need to say to sell them?

#5) Why they won't buy. Just as important as knowing why they'll buy is knowing why they won't buy from you. When you hang up the phone you need to know:

- Why are they really getting another quote?
- What are some of their sore spots?
- What are they trying to avoid?
- Why won't they buy?

These five elements are the bare minimum of what you need to know about every prospect you qualify. These points form the basis of your qualifying checklist, and you need to have scripted questions that you ask on each and every call to find these things out. You do have a qualifying checklist don't you?

If not, use the above questions to form your initial checklist and start finding

and qualifying buyers today!

#5 How to Avoid the Brush Off

So many times our prospects aren't really interested, but they either don't know how or won't come out and tell us. Instead they will say things like, "Go ahead and send me the (information, brochure, demo) and I'll take a look." Or, "Put that quote in writing and send it to me."

When a Top 20% closer hears this, his/her first thought is, "I don't have the time to do that, and I especially don't have the time to follow up with an unqualified lead." Here's how they handle it and how you should, too:

Put off #1: "Go ahead and send me your information."

Your response:

"I'd be happy to, and if you like what you see would you be ready to place an order?"

OR,

"Before I do, I want to make sure you'd be ready to act on it if you like it. Let me ask you...(qualifying questions on budget, decision-making process, etc.)"

OR,

"Sure, and after you review it, how soon are you going to make a decision on it?"

OR,

“And what would you need to see to say yes to it?”

Put off No. 2: “Put that quote in writing and send it to me.”

Your response:

“I’d be happy to, and from what we’ve just discussed, does it sound like you’d go with it?”

OR,

“Absolutely. How does this compare with the other quotes you’ve received so far?”

OR,

“Great. Based on the quote/price I just gave you does this sound like it fits within your budget?”

#6 Voicemail: The 5 Golden Rules

I remember a time -- and it doesn't seem like that long ago -- when voicemail was all the rage. There was no e-mail, so people tended to honor and even return voicemail messages. It was a good time...

But that's history now. E-mail has changed everything, and people now hit the delete button on their voicemail messages the instant they hear something they don't like -- which is usually when it's a message from an unknown inside sales rep. What to do?

The good news is that there are some rules you can follow that will give you the best chance at getting your prospect to maybe call you back.

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And I say maybe because people are simply too busy to call people back -- especially a sales call

To give yourself the best chance of being one of the lucky few who do get called back, follow the 5 Golden Rules of voicemail messages, and cross your fingers -- a little luck never hurts.

Golden Rule #1 -- Be specific.

It is imperative to do some research and leave a message that specifically addresses a problem or event that your prospect is dealing with. For example, if you find out on their website that they are opening a new branch or division in another city, mention this and tie it in with your value proposal. And always use their first name. Something like:

"Hi Barbara, Mike Brooks here with HMS software. I'm calling about your new office that's opening in Houston next month, and I wanted to provide you with some ideas that may help with your networking issues. We work with a lot of companies in the area, and I think you'll find it useful if we talk.

You can reach me by calling area code (800) 222-0568. That number again is area code (800) 222-0568, and ask for Mike Brooks. I look forward speaking with you and thanks for returning my call."

Golden Rule #2 -- Use a script.

You absolutely must script out exactly what you're going to say. Nothing gets your message deleted quicker than a series of ums and ahs. People are way

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too busy to sit through -- let alone call back -- a message that rambles on and on by someone who doesn't appear to know why they are calling.

Also, by scripting your message you can create great content ahead of time and deliver it like a professional -- unlike the other 80% of the messages they get.

Golden Rule #3 -- State their problem and offer a solution.

Did you notice that in the voicemail sample in rule #1, I mentioned a specific event (their move) and a possible problem (networking issues) as well as potential solutions to their problems (some ideas that may help you)?

This is the winning voicemail formula -- mention specific problems your prospect is having and offer your solutions to them. Prospects are only thinking about themselves and will only be interested in you if you can help them solve their problems.

By addressing this in your voicemail, you stand the best possible chance of getting your call returned.

Golden Rule #4 -- Mention how your solution has worked for others in their industry.

Did you notice in the sample voicemail message the part about "we work with a lot of other companies in your area"? People want to work with, and in fact feel comfortable working with, people who understand their business. If you have experience at solving other company's problems, then your prospect will want the same solution as well.

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Everyone wants to work with successful companies and if other companies are using you, they figure you've got to be doing something right.

Golden Rule #5 – Never, ever leave more than two messages.

After you leave your first message, wait at least a week before you leave a second. And if that doesn't get returned, move on.

The last thing you want to be is a pest, and a desperate one at that. After two messages, your prospect has your name and number, and if they are interested they will call you back. And if they don't then you get to spend time looking for someone who will.

In conclusion: to give your voicemail messages the best chance of being returned, follow these 5 Golden Rules. And make sure to have a solid script ready for when they do call back!

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#7 Double Your Sales With This One Technique

I talk a lot about the techniques that separate the Top 20% of the money earners from the other 80%. As you know, my Ezine is dedicated to providing you, often word for word, with the exact tools, tips and strategies that you can use to become a Top 20% producer. *And today I'm going to share with you one of the most effective and easiest ways to double your sales.* And it has to do with what you say when you call a prospect back to close the sale.

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Here's what 80% of the inside sales reps currently say:

"Oh hi, this is _____ with the XYZ Company. I'm calling to follow up on the (proposal, information, etc.). Did you have a chance to review that?"

Or, another equally weak opening most sales reps use is:

"Hi, this is _____ with the XYZ Company, how are you? Good, I was just calling to see what you thought of the (proposal, information, etc.)?"

Wrong, wrong, wrong! I cringe when I hear sales reps open the close this way! First, you're giving all control over to your prospect -- why would you want to do that? Second, you're just opening yourself up for a stall or put off – "No, I haven't had time yet, why don't you call me back next week?"

If you want to be a Top 20% closer, strike the phrases "just calling to follow up" and "just wanted to see if you..." out of your pitch – FOREVER!

Here is how the Top 20% start their closing callbacks, and how you can double your sales starting with your very next call:

"Hi _____ this is _____ with the ABC Company. You know, I've been looking forward to getting back with you and getting you started with our (award-winning newsletter, number one industry ranked product, world-class service -- fill in your product/service/investment here). I know you'll be as happy and satisfied as my other clients are.

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Now, I'm sure you (read/received the information), and I'm sure you see how it will benefit you. My question is: do you want to start with our professional position of _____, or does the _____ position work better for you?"

Now shut up and listen. Earth shattering to you? Perhaps it is. But so will be your results. This works on so many levels:

- 1) You're asking for the deal right away (and you'll be surprised because some will buy on the spot!)
- 2) It immediately starts the close on an assumptive and positive note.
- 3) You eliminate any put-offs and stalls.
- 4) You immediately get the prospect to tell you where they stand and what they're thinking (and what you'll need to do to close the sale).

This is a powerful technique. I guarantee that if you begin using this approach on every sales call, *you will be well on your way to doubling your closing percentage and income.*

But don't take my word for it -- try it and let me know your results.

Another Way to Double Your Sales in 90 Days

Sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? Stan Billue, a top telemarketing sales trainer in the late 80's, claimed that he had *a sure fire technique that could double your sales in 90 days if you just followed it.* So I did. And it worked!

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The technique? Record your calls. Everything that you are doing right, and every area you need to improve in will be revealed to you in just a few hours. And by being able to calmly listen to your qualifying/closing calls all the way through, here are just a few of things you'll hear that you're probably missing:

- What your prospect's true buying motives are.
- What your prospect's objections are.
- Whether or not you listened to these and answered them.
- Whether you were listening at all.
- How often you talked past the close.
- How many objections you created.
- Whether you heard their objections and answered them and then confirmed your answer and asked for the order—or just kept pitching!

Everything will be there on tape and you and your manager can then go about correcting your technique and immediately improving your success on the phone. The bottom line for all sales teams and sales reps is that if your fundamentals and techniques are wrong, then you will keep getting the same results -- you won't make quotas, you will be frustrated at the end of each day, and you won't improve. Period.

You must correct the fundamental problems. And to do this you must first know what they are! Recording your calls is the fastest, easiest, and best way to do this. All highly successful companies do this all the time. Start listening to the next on hold message you get and I'll bet you hear, "Please note that this call is being recorded for training and quality assurance."

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Guess what they are doing with these recordings? They are using them to train and improve their inside sales teams!

Without a doubt, this one technique was the most important thing I did that catapulted me into the Top 20%. I relentlessly recorded myself and began improving in all areas and on each and every call. I listened to them at lunch, on the drive home, with my manager, etc. Because of recording myself, I literally doubled my income in 90 days. And I never looked back.

For managers and business owners, recording your sales reps is the single most important thing you can do to increase revenues. Among other things, if you:

- Want to know why someone is in making sales? Record them and you'll have your answer in a day.
- Want to see if your training is working? Record them before and after see how many reps are implementing your training.
- Want great sales training material for your next meeting? Record your top reps and play the good parts in your next meeting.

Bottom line -- *if you want to double your sales and income selling over the phone*, and want the fastest most effective way to do this, then go to Radio Shack today (or search online) and have a recorder in place tomorrow. Start recording and listening to your tapes, correcting your fundamentals, and watch your closing rate and income soar.

#9 Five Ways to Stop Talking Past the Close

Have you ever caught yourself doing it? You deliver a great presentation, think that your prospect is with you, but you just keep pitching.

Or, you get an objection, you answer it, but then you just keep pitching -- or worse -- you go to the next rebuttal and start reading that pitch.

Talking past the close is much more common than repeatedly asking for the sale (which is what you should be doing). And why not? It's scary to ask for the deal and be told no. It's much easier to keep pitching, "Maybe they'll just cave and finally hear something they want and buy."

Sound familiar? It should. That's how 80% of your competition is pitching. They are ad-libbing, talking past the close, and even *introducing new objections*. What a mess!

Here are five ways to stop talking past the close, so you can spend more time closing, and earning the income the Top 20% do:

- 1) Record yourself. You've heard me say it before; well here it comes again. Before you can stop talking past the close, you first must begin hearing and catching yourself doing it. One day of recording yourself and you'll become immediately aware of when and how you do it.
- 2) Use a script. One of the best parts of a well-crafted script is that it ends with you asking for the deal! Listen to your tapes and then craft a good response to the common objections you are getting. Then, stick to your script.
- 3) Ask for the deal five times. If you give yourself a close quota of asking

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for the deal at least five times, then you are going to be much quicker in asking for it.

Keep track of this on a piece of paper using stick figures. If 20 minutes has gone by and you don't have any marks on the paper, then you know you're in trouble!

4) Welcome getting a no. So many sales reps are afraid of no's, but you don't have to be. With most sales you've made, you've probably heard some no's along the way, so reframe the way you think about them and realize the truth -- each no gets you closer to a yes. So welcome getting a no. It usually means you're that much closer to getting the sale.

5) Shut up and listen. Force yourself to be quiet after you ask for the sale. Use your mute button or cover the mouthpiece and count to 5 – 1, 1000, 2, 2000, etc. By forcing yourself to remain silent for five seconds after asking for the sale, you'll actually have something to concentrate on rather than fear.

Keep repeating this to yourself – "I'm listening now, not pitching." That may sound silly, but it works – try it.

The bottom line is that the Top 20% know the value of asking for the sale and remaining quiet. You can learn this, too. Make a commitment to use one or all five of the above techniques and soon you'll also be closing like the Top 20%!

#10 Get Your Prospect Involved

Many of you have benefited from the article "The Power of Trial Closes," and you've told me how using these have already helped you take your prospect's pulse to find out how your presentation is going.

Another way to do this is to get your prospect involved -- especially at the beginning. Besides allowing you to gauge their level of interest, this also tells you how much control over the sales process you have -- a crucial component to your close.

Use the following techniques to help involve your prospect:

- 1) During the qualifying call ask your prospect to "*Grab a pen and a piece of paper,*" and have them write down things like a benefit, the price, your name, your company name and phone number, your next appointment time, etc.
- 2) At the start of the close, have them physically get the information, the quote, material, demo, etc., and never begin your presentation until they do.
- 3) During your presentation, have them get their calculator out and crunch the numbers with you or have them write out specific details about your product or service.

Any way you can get your prospect involved helps you gain control and also commits them more to you and your product. It's also in excellent way to gauge their level of interest.

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Obviously the less the prospect cooperates the less chance of the sale there is. This is what's so great about this technique - it tells you who's real and who's not!

Like all the techniques I write about, begin using this one as well and you will grow stronger as a closer and gain more control over the sales process.

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Conclusion

If your sales team is in the 50% of teams that aren't making their monthly sales quotas regularly, then daily, specific sales training is your fastest way of changing that. There are other factors as well, including having a defined Sales Process, an organized sales training program that reinforces your best practices, etc. But using and reinforcing the ten techniques above will bring you and your team immediate results.

Professional Bio

Mike Brooks is founder and principle of Mr. Inside Sales, a Los Angeles based inside sales consulting and training firm. Mike has been voted one of the most Influential Inside Sales Professionals two years in a row by The American Association of Inside Sales Professionals, and is the recognized authority in the industry.

Mike is hired by business owners to develop and implement proven sales processes that help them immediately scale and grow Multi-Million Dollar Inside Sales Teams. He also offers customized sales training programs, works as a virtual V.P. of Sales and offers Executive Coaching programs to business owners around the world. For more information, visit his website: www.MrInsideSales.com