



SCREENER AND VOICE MAIL TIPS TO HELP YOU GET TO MORE BUYERS

Here are some ideas to help with screeners and voice mail.

Don't Get Lost in the Phone System Bermuda Triangle.

When initially trying to locate a decision maker you've never spoken with, if you detect even the slightest bit of hesitation in a screener's voice when they give you a name, continuing questioning. Nothing is as frustrating as being shoved from one unwanted soul to another like a hot potato. Find out the title and department before you're sent there.

Ask for the Highest Level.

Find the level higher than the one that typically makes the decision. This way, if you need to be referred, it's better to say that you "... were speaking with Karen at Mr. McNabb's office, and she felt that Ms. Collins would be the person I should be speaking with." It's important that you don't imply that Mr. McNabb said that she should buy from you; just let them know that you've come from above and your call will implicitly carry more clout.

Go to Other Departments.

This also works when an operator or screener is not authorized to give out the names of the people you're looking for. Ask for someone in sales ... you know they're always willing to talk! Larger companies have purchasing departments that might be able to help. You might end up speaking with these people eventually, but what you really want to find out now is who uses and recommends your products. If you run into a talkative purchasing agent, you just might also learn who they're buying from, what they spend, and other goodies that can help you.

Even if you do land at the polar opposite of where you need to be in a company, use something like this: "I hope you can help me. I'm not in the right department, and you can probably point me in the correct direction. I'm Dale Strong with Thomas Development. I'm looking for the name of the person who handles the site selection for your franchises."

Listen to their Entire Voice Mail Message.

If you don't, you might be missing potentially useful information. I was sitting in with a sales rep listening to call, and as soon as the voice mail answered, she hung up. I asked her to call back and listen again. On the recording she this time heard the person say that he wasn't going to be at this location for the next several days since he was at his other brand new location, and gave the phone number, and the hours he would be there! Now this rep knew nothing about the other location, but called him there, congratulated him on his expansion, and managed to close a sale right there!

Be prepared for voice mail.

Don't place a call without being ready to leave a statement on voice mail. Not just any message, though. Talk about ideas that you have which may potentially help them benefit in some way, or avoid loss. Talk about a problem you've solved for another company, and mention you'd like to ask them a few questions to determine if it would work for them as well.

Sound interesting.

There's something psychological about talking to a tape recorder that causes even the most eloquent speakers to lapse into their robot-like voice. Be yourself! Visualize the live person you are speaking to at the other end, not a passionless microchip! Practice your messages. Recite-do not read-them into your own tape recorder. Listen to yourself, being very critical about areas you want to improve. Focus on your inflection, putting variation in your voice to convey the moods of enthusiasm, urgency, and importance you desire to convey. Be sure your articulation is crisp, especially in pronouncing the ends of words and consonants.

Hang up if you need to.

If you are not prepared, and the recording has the effect of erasing all signs of intelligence from your short-term memory, like a computer experiencing a data-zapping power surge, hang up before you say anything. Think through the message you'd like to leave. Then call back. Or, if their system allows it, review your message to be certain you're comfortable with it. If not, do it over.

Answer Screeners' Questions.

Never try to evade a screener's question. That's one sure way to get dumped. They simply want to determine if you have something of value. Use something like, "Let me explain why I'm calling. We work with companies such as yours that do large numbers of air express shipments to help them cut down on their total bill each month, and in some cases the savings runs from a few dollars to a few thousand. Whether or not we could do the same for you depends on several variables that I'd like to discuss with Mr. Holloway."

It's tough to sell if you can't get through. Try these ideas.