



WHEN BUSINESS DROPS OFF, ALWAYS LOOK HERE

It's amazing where you can find hidden revenue when you take a moment to look around your business. Many businesses are losing revenue because of their phone system, whether you have multiple lines, or a home phone, no matter. Either can easily lose you money. YOUR PHONE SYSTEM Recently I've called a couple of clients' phone systems. In several instances I was trapped in a queue. It was frustrating. I don't necessarily have a problem with queues that prompt me to "press #1 for the children's department" or "press #5 for Dr. Smith" rather, I get frustrated when I follow your recording instructions and I get no where! Thus, I hang up resulting in missed revenue. LESSON Call into your phone system at least once a week, no less, even if you have only one home phone line with voice mail. Call into it. Is it still working? Has your greeting suddenly disappeared? Is there even a dial-tone? Has the line been cut? Did you leave your phone plugged into your fax? Is your receptionist still pleasant or has he suddenly become fed up with his job, grumbling at callers? If business suddenly drops off for no reason, always look to your phone. Call all your numbers, especially after you've requested any changes or updates from your phone provider. [We all have stories to tell about the latter.] And don't forget to check all forwarding numbers from your yellow page ads. Can't remember? I check mine every time the bills arrive. A quick story.... Many years ago I worked as a marketing manager for a large telecommunications company. One afternoon my general manager tried reaching all her direct reports, only to get voice mail each time. The next morning she demanded that all voice mails be deactivated. Moving forward, the receptionist was to take all calls live and handwrite all messages. It was a fiasco. We were a sales-based organization. Part of the bloodline for any sales organization is their voice mail. A large majority of deals are concocted through voice mail, since all parties can be on the run and leave long winded messages, moving the deal along to closure. Voice mail was reactivated about a week later. MORAL OF THE STORY.... #1 -- Never make critical decisions for your business out of frustration. Had the GM spoken with her direct reports first, a more stable solution could have been created, i.e., a manager is assigned to be on call each day. Because of her knee jerk decision, sales were stifled that week. Of course the GM still received her hefty paycheck, but her army of ants brought less home to their young the week after. #2 -- Voice mail is not a bad thing. It's an incredible marketing weapon when used effectively. First and foremost, you should return all calls with 24 hours. If you need more time, then your greeting should say so. If email is faster for you, especially if you're bombarded by vendors trying to sell you stuff, as I am, then proactively give a "unique" email address, whereby you direct all sales inquiries to this email. This way, you can cut and paste various questions you've already asked time and time again of other vendors, and simply email it. Make the vendor provide you the information you want. Until then, there is no reason for the two of you to have a voice conversation. Until he gives you the basics you need, i.e., Does his product reach your demographic? If it doesn't, he's wasting your time. And you're wasting his time but not telling him so upfront. Remember, most salespeople have been taught to push until they get to either "no" or "yes." Sadly, many skip over the entire part of establishing a relationship, exploring what the prospect needs, and hanging tight for when you "really" have a solution. Start obsessing over your phone system and all touch points that impact your phone. You're losing money.

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