

Get to the Point

By Judith Filek — President,
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How many times have you called a customer to inform them about a new product or service, only to hear him say, “I’m due at a meeting so I can only talk for two minutes?” It’s frustrating and down right annoying, but it is the reality of business today. Our customers simply don’t have the time they used to have to talk on the phone. It’s not that they aren’t interested in your products or services. They just have too many things to do and not enough time. More than ever before, it is important to — **Get to the Point.**

So how do you do it? First, **Plan ahead.** Before you initiate any call, review the information in your database on the customer, particularly anything about the customer’s needs. When you do initiate the call, immediately **state the purpose of the call and, if possible, tie it to what you know about the customer’s needs.** “*This is Harold Smith with Arcadia Publishing. I am calling to let you know about two of our newest business resource books. I know you have been trying to grow your business collection.*” Notice the representative picks only two books to introduce, and the books he picks are those that the customer really might want to consider. Even if the customer is too busy to talk right now, this **focused purpose statement** will make the customer more receptive to rescheduling or setting an appointment with an outside sales representative.

Secondly, when customers tell you they only have two minutes, they want you to **tell them clearly and concisely two or three benefits or advantages of your product and then hang up.** They do not want you to go into details on the phone. Very briefly, tell them what they want to hear — how your product or service will save them time, money or gain them market shares. For example, if you are trying to introduce a new phone to a food chain store, you might say, “*The terrific thing about this phone is that it will allow your stockers to reorder products just by entering the UPC code number. Delivery people will be immediately alerted to increase your typical order or to make a delivery on an unscheduled day. What that will mean to*

your food shoppers is that their favorite products will always be available. You won’t be out done by your competitors.

Finally, **customers guess that you are calling for a purpose. Always, make sure to tell them what you want. Always, close with a specific action step. Never assume.** If you don’t request anything from the customer, you run the risk of being disappointed. “*Jack, I know time is very precious, particularly right now. Our field sales representative will be in Chicago February 6, 7 and 8. Would you like to set up an appointment so that you can see for yourself how this system works?*” If you have said something of value earlier, you will find appointments easier to get.

As inside sales representatives, it is so easy to lose sight of the fact that our customers are just as busy as us. They have a multitude of projects to complete before the day is done. They simply can’t spend a lot of time on phone. When we plan and prepare for our sales call and say something our customers will value, they notice and respond. They also respect you for valuing their time and will look forward to your calls. Getting to the point is essential. It will distinguish you from your competitors.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. To reach us, phone (847) 438-4480 or contact our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.