THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME!

This is a true story. Over the course of a year, a local branch manager had 7 separate photocopier sales people conduct face to face prospecting calls on her business. However, since the current equipment was on a lease with an expiry date far into the future, it was not the right time in the buying cycle to start the sales process. The branch manager asked each sales rep to call back on the same specified date in the future. Of the 7, only 2 sales reps called back. Only 2!

Although this may sound unbelievable, it is more often the rule than the exception. Research shows that 2 of 3 sales are made to customers who have said no not once, but 5 times. A wasted sales opportunity like the one above stems from the fact that 75% of all sales people give up after the first or second rejection. Given this, it is certainly easy to see why the other 25% of sales reps produce 90-95% of all sales! These are the reps that have follow up systems that tell them when to call again.

Ask yourself this question. If you went out today and collected 10 business cards, only one of which was from a company that could buy today, what would you do with the other 9? If you answered anything else other than file them by your next sales contact date, you are wasting sales opportunities.

When you prospect, you should ask qualifying questions that tell you when the prospect is most likely to buy. Questions like “When did you last negotiate your supplier contract?” or “How long have you had your current equipment?” will give you a very good idea where the customer is in the buying cycle. Once this is known, you can easily determine when they are most likely to buy again.

For example, if your prospects tend to renegotiate their contacts every 4 years, and a company negotiated their contract 3 and a half years ago, chances are you have an excellent prospect today. On the other hand, if they just renewed their contract 1 year ago, they will not be a prospect for another 2 and a half years, and therefore should be re-c0ntacted then.

It is critical that you file each company you prospect by your next sales contact date. If your current Follow-Up File or CRM system cannot do this, change it so it can, or get a new one that does. In other words, perhaps your Blackberry should only be a cell phone.

When you file by the next contact date, you create a list of companies that are organized by the date of their next purchase. Most sales representatives would consider this information a license to print their own commission checks! If you don’t do this and just file each company alphabetically, all you have really done is create a glorified phone book.

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Susan A. Enns is managing partner of B2B Sales Connections. She has a proven track record of success, with over 20 years of direct sales, management and executive level business to business experience. Currently, Susan provides revenue-generating consulting services to sales organizations and sales professionals in the business to business marketplace, including the operation of Canada’s premier niche job board and career training website for business to business sales professionals. She has written the training course *Action Plan For Sales Success*, and as the B2B Sales Coach, she writes and edits the company’s newsletter, *AIM HIGHER*. For more information, please visit www.b2bsalesconnections.com or contact Susan directly at senns@b2bsalesconnections.com or www.linkedin.com/in/susanenns .