



# SBMA's Sales Tips of the Week

*From Your Communications Team at Southern Building Material Association*

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## THE 3 MOST DANGEROUS SALES CLICHÉS

By **Tom Searcy**

Clichés can wreak havoc. In sales, especially, many clichés can cause damage in the hiring processes, the buying experience and the sales conversation. Here are three common ones that are dangerously wrong and drive me crazy:

### **"Sales is all about relationships."**

Maybe that was true when Larry Tate and Darren Stevens were drinking triples on the 1970's show "Bewitched," but not so much anymore. I watch salespeople lose deals all day long and the bad news is delivered by that sales rep's "best friend ever" at the prospect company. Selling is about a lot of things, and relationships are only one sliver of it, and that sliver is shrinking.

If you want to improve your sales performance, don't assess the strength of your contacts by your "emotional connection." Rather, you will know you have leverage based upon your ability to influence the behaviors of your key contacts. For example:

- When you ask for unique information about the prospect company, the decision-making process, the people at the table and how your company is doing, can you get it?
- When you ask for unique access- a meeting, a phone call, an introduction, a tour or to review a document, can you get it?
- When you ask for "most favored nation status" in the consideration process, (last look on pricing, final presentation position or a more executive audience for your proposal), can you get it?

If these requests are not possible, then the relationships you have are irrelevant, at least in terms of closing the deal. Relationships definitely will make the selling process more pleasant, but without leverage, they mean nothing when it comes to making the sale.

### **"Salespeople are born."**

This is partly true--people, after all, are born, not hatched. But there are many traits that make salespeople effective, including being curious, good communicators, great listeners, leadership abilities, accessibility, integrity, and intelligence. But none of these qualities are specific just to "born salespeople." These are the qualities of effective executives of all disciplines. So you need to look for effective leaders and effective executives if you want explosive sales, not the cliché of a glad-handing, joke-telling, hyper-extrovert.

### **"Sales is a numbers game."**

Maybe in the world of the previous century, activity was equivalent to productivity. More calls, letters, emails, appointments all translated into more sales. However, this is no longer a causal link. If you want

to become intimately acquainted with this fact, answer every RFP that crosses your desk and you will see that success is not guaranteed because of activity. Sales effectiveness is about efficiency and yield, rather than the mind-numbing belief that more in the top of the funnel equals more out the bottom.

Sales truly is a numbers game when the numbers you are watching are the right ones. If you are watching the inputs only - prospecting activities for instance, you are missing it. If you are watching the closes only- signed contracts and orders, you are missing it. In the large, complex sales you need to be watching the "WIP," (work in process). The key to this idea is knowing the distinct stages of your sales process and then setting performance expectations for each of the movements from one stage to the next in the process. By having an objective evaluation of the movements in the process, you are watching the full story - inputs, sales stage movements and outcomes.

Clichés hide the important truths, regardless of the topic. Don't be sucked into the sales clichés because they will lead to the wrong conclusions.

Tom Searcy is a nationally recognized author, speaker, and the foremost expert in large account sales. \* Sign up for his weekly tips by visiting [www.HuntBigSales.com](http://www.HuntBigSales.com) \* Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#) \* Follow him on [Twitter](#) \* Friend him on [Facebook](#) Photo courtesy of

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## Top 3 Ways to Get Your Phone Calls Returned

By [Tom Searcy](#)

Chasing sucks. Prospects, clients, people who owe you information, drawings, money. I hate having to chase. Most of us have to do it--A LOT. Most of the time we go into the bottomless pit of voice mail hell to be tortured by the digital demons therein. Here is how to get your phone call returned more often. There are no perfect strategies that guarantee 100% response; even the IRS auditors don't get 100% return calls. But you can do much better if you follow this approach.

*Quick note:* This skill focuses on getting a returned call from someone you have already met. Prospecting is a different skill.

### Step 1: Tell the person what you want.

Calls that say "Call me when you get a chance" are relegated to someone's "B" or "C" priority list. (When was the last time you were working your "B" priority list?). If your voice mail says "Give me a call back, I have a couple of things I want to review with you," then you are never going on that person's radar of must-do priorities.

Tell the person you are calling what you want right at the beginning of the call. Make certain your voice mail is not longer than 40 seconds- they won't listen to it. What do you tell them you want? A document, a phone call, an email, a piece of information- whatever it is that you want, ask for it and ask for it fast. I'll give examples below.

### Step 2: Speak in terms of time.

Tell them:

- **How long the returned call will take.** (3 minutes, 11 minutes, "less than a cup of coffee" are all good increments)
- **Must-talk-by date and time.** Your message needs to say, "This call has to happen by...." And

then give the date and time. End of day tomorrow, Friday by noon, this afternoon before 3:45pm. Success goes up if the window is later than 4 hours from now and no later than 24 hours from the point of your voice mail message you are leaving. If, by some miracle, you are actually talking to an administrative support person, the time issue is the same, just ask to book the appointment.

### **Step 3: Declare consequences.**

To create urgency you need to declare consequences. Notice I used the word "consequences" not "threats." Consequences are the natural and understandable outcomes of an action or inaction. You are telling the person you are reaching out too that if he does not call back to you this will happen. Factual and without emotion. Here are some approaches:

- Negative Option - If you do not hear back, you will assume the answer is "no" and you will act accordingly.
- Time expiration - If you do not hear back, time will expire on the offer and what has been offered will be rescinded.
- Delay of Progress - If you do not hear back, then the proposed date for start or end will not be attainable and will be delayed.
- Positive Option - If you do not hear back you will take that as tacit approval and will move forward with the previously agreed upon actions.

### **Examples:**

\* "Bill, this is Tom from XYZ. I need the final drawings we discussed by noon tomorrow in my email or I will not be able to honor the delivery date of next Friday. Please give me a 30 second call when you have sent them to confirm. Thanks."

\* "Sue, this is Joe from PDQ. I need confirmation of the wire transfer by end of business today or we will not ship. Please give me a call back by 4:00pm to ensure shipment. Thanks."

\* "John, this is Deirdre from Pinnacle. I only need 3 minutes to get the details from you I need to give you the proposal you requested. If we connect by noon today, you'll have my proposal before you pack up to go home. Thanks."

\* "Frank, this is Alex from Acme. A call no longer than a cup of coffee will sort out the issues you raised about the proposal. We have been out of touch for over a week- that usually means bad things. If I don't hear back from you by end of day tomorrow, I'll take that as a definite "no" and assume you are not interested in the proposal. Thanks."

### **What you should notice is that**

- 1) This approach takes a forceful and direct tone, rather than a subservient and weak tone.
- 2) The messages are short. People rarely listen to long, detailed voice mails. They scan, much like we scan our emails. They store the things they intend to listen to later and delete everything else. They rarely get to what they say and eventually it solves itself or they delete it.
- 3) Action requests, time frames and consequences are clear.

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