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# Opening Statements

Nothing is more important to prospecting (other than actually doing it) than the quality of your opening statement.

In person or over the phone, windows of attention are typically slammed shut in less than 5 seconds. This means you have to maximize the impact of every word, syllable, and pause in your lead-off statements. They need to be works of art ... compelling. To minimize the importance of preparing a solid opening statement is to potentially short-circuit your entire sales effort.

Fortunately, opening statements can be prepared and practiced before a sales opportunity is ever pursued. Below are some guidelines and thoughts for creating your opening statement(s), as well as some samples for you to rework into your particular sales world. Remember, the people you're trying to reach are likely being approached by many others each day (competitors of yours and not). A powerful, compelling, and practiced opening statement can launch many sales opportunities for you where a competitor's lack of preparation can leave them standing still.

## How to build an opening statement

**The objective:** Create immediate interest for further discussion. Engage the prospect.

**The method:** Work through the following questions and tips using pen to paper or fingers to keyboard.

### *What do I sell?*

Answer this using as few words as possible. Avoid using words or phrases that mean nothing to outsiders (e.g., industry acronyms, fluffy corporate communication language).

### *How do my customers benefit when they buy my product/ service?*

If you sell to consumers, include the potential emotional added benefits of being liked, respected, more attractive, etc. (if these benefits exist).

If you sell to businesses, be sure to include the emotional benefits to the purchasing customer (the decision maker) in addition to the more specific benefits realized by the company (a good buy or product implementation can be the road to promotion or status within an organization). You're looking for several true benefits, not just features.



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### **Now...**

Build several opening statements for the different scenarios you might face (e.g., catching a decision maker without a screener or gatekeeper, catching a decision maker “on the way out the door,” delivering the opening statement to a screener or gatekeeper who insists on knowing “what it is in reference to?”, leaving a voicemail).

Address each of the following in whatever order seems most appropriate for your particular sales world (just make sure the benefit to your prospect is mentioned within the first 10 seconds and it’s real ... not fluff).

- Who you are
- Where you’re from (company name)
- What you sell (in very simple terms)
- How your prospect will benefit from your product/service
- A question to gauge interest of the prospect

### **Keep in mind...**

- Opening statements aren’t meant to close a sale... they’re meant to get attention and engage someone.
- Maximize every word, syllable, and pause.
- Never leave a misleading or vague voicemail message or email. Hit them with your complete and prepared opening (it should be short enough). If it was worth dialing the phone or sending an email, it’s worth leaving/delivering your opening statement. You will not trick someone into buying something because you “caught them.”
- Never use industry jargon or fancy words.
- Be specific. Don’t be vague.

### **Words to consider using...**

- Maximize, increase, grow [sales, customer retention, productivity, etc.]
- Minimize, reduce, decrease, eliminate [expenses, customer service challenges, diversions, etc.]
- Profit from
- Specific, specifically
- Save, conserve
- Accumulate, acquire
- Prevent
- Fully
- Immediate, now

### **Phrases to avoid...**

- How are you today?
- I’d like to learn a little more about your business to determine...
- We’re the leading provider of...
- We work with several of your competitors.
- I’d like to see if there are some ways we might work together.
- Is now a good time to talk?
- Did I catch you at a bad time?

These phrases may be used at other times during the sales process, but they have no place in the opening statement. They don’t capture immediate attention or encourage the prospect to engage with you and, therefore, can take away from the initial attention allotted to you by the prospect.

The last two questions in the list can show that you respect the time of the person you’re talking to (live or over the phone). But over the phone, because so few people answer without being able to see who’s calling (caller ID), you might assume it’s a good time or they wouldn’t have answered.

## ***And one more thing...***

No One Really Cares (NORC).

Prepare with that in mind and you're more likely to create something wonderful ... wonderful opening statements, of course, but also better responses to the standard objections you hear, better follow-up voicemail and email messages, and better reasons to give for why someone should buy from you.

### **NORC**

It's not that your prospects and customers shouldn't care (or never care). It's that if you approach your contact preparation in a less egocentric way and are tough on yourself (just as your prospects and customers can and will be), you'll be stronger for it. Ultimately, you'll help your prospects and customers see the value of your offer much faster (or qualify them much faster so you can invest your sales time in better places).

They're busy, just as you are. If they're doing their work, you're a distraction until you have something of interest to them. Getting and keeping their attention isn't an entitlement. It's an opportunity and a privilege.

No one really cares. NORC.

It'll make you stronger.

### ***Sample opening statements***

Hi, [first name]. We provide [product/ service] in order to help people [take advantage of, minimize, maximize, prevent, etc.] [something of importance]. I'm calling to see if this might be helpful to [you/ your clients].

Hi, [first name]. This is [sales name] with [company name]. We provide [product/ service] in order to help companies minimize their [whatever] expenses and maximize monthly sales revenue. I'm calling to see if this might be valuable to you and your team.

Hi, [first name]. [sales name] with [company name]. We help companies fully profit from their existing resources through our [product/ service] that [does/ has/ have whatever differentiating point or feature]. I'm calling to see if you'd be interested in discussing how it might help your [whatever] efforts/ initiatives.

Hi, [first name]. [sales name], [company name]. We deliver [product/ service] which might be able to save you more than [specific percentage] on your [whatever] expenses. Would you be interested in discussing how it might fit into your environment?

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### **What you can do with this material...**

You can read it, discuss it, and share it with others (online, by hand, by mouth).

### **What you can't do with this material...**

Please don't publish this material as your own, alter it, revise it, imply authorship of it, sell it, or use it as a foundation for a speaking or training event outside of your own company.