

Title:

How to Deal With Salespeople

Word Count:

594

Summary:

Persistent sales people can tear your day apart. Here's how to protect your time and sanity.

Keywords:

leadership, communication, sales people, time management, respect

Article Body:

If you're an executive, you may feel like a open jelly sandwich at a picnic.

Every crazy critter in the world wants to bite into your budget. Here's how to protect your time and preserve your sanity.

1) Ask questions

Many salespeople work from a script. Rather than let them read it, interrupt with, "Excuse me." Then determine the purpose of the call by asking questions such as, "What are you selling?" or "Why are you calling?" Set bounds on the call by stating that you will take one minute to hear their offer and that you have a timer. Cut through the enticement by getting the facts that you need to decide if their offer has value.

2) Just say no

If you have no interest in the offer, tell the salesperson, "No." If you have no interest in the company, product, or service, ask to be removed from their call list. Be polite and firm. Simply say, "We have no need for your service. Please remove my name from your list." Avoid small talk, arguments, or complaints. All of these waste your time and lead to nothing. In addition, savvy sales people appreciate candor. It frees them to proceed with their business.

3) Decline literature

If you attempt to rid yourself of a salesperson by asking for information, you cause three bad things to happen. 1) You guarantee a return call ("Hi, did you

get what I sent?"). 2) You waste the salesperson's money. 3) You add to the mail that you have to process. Thus, decline literature unless you are interested in the offer. Similarly, decline appointments, trial samples, or invitations that you know you would cancel. And never ask for a proposal if you have already selected another provider.

4) Return phone messages

Sadly, some people attempt to say "no" by ignoring the caller. This is a terrible strategy for two reasons. First, the caller does not know what you are doing. They will conclude that you may be traveling or sick and thus call again, and again, and again. Second, ignoring someone is rude, especially if you asked the person to call you, send a proposal, or provide information. (Special note: every vendor is also a customer. Insulting people can backfire by costing you business.) If you want to end a dialogue without talking to the person, call (or have an assistant call) and leave a message during off hours (early morning, late evening, weekends). Most good business people appreciate candor and understand the word, "No."

5) Use voice mail

Strategic voice mail can protect your time. Rather than leave an outgoing message stating that you will return calls, leave a message that helps screen calls. For example, your message could state, "Hi this is Pat Smith. Leave a message if you have a work related issue. If you are selling wingnuts, do not leave a message because we are not buying them." or "If you are selling something, call Chris at Extension 101." In the latter case, Chris may be someone assigned to screen sales calls.

6) Be open to possibilities

Realize that the caller is another human being, trying to earn a living. In addition, that caller may also be a customer or able to influence your customers. Thus, rather than immediately reject every call, consider that some of the offers may help you improve your business and make your job easier. Treat callers with the respect and courtesy that you expect from others. You will find valuable opportunities when you give them a fair chance to explain why they called. And you can always say, "No."