Transcript – GET to YES Podcast

E16: B2B Keeping a Cold Call Warm

Hi, Neil Osborne from The Sales Catalyst here. In this episode we're continuing the journey towards building your Hair, Beauty or Body sales territory through new business acquisition and new accounts.

Whether you're selling to Beauty Salons, Skin Clinics or Hairdressing Salons, constant sales growth comes through the acquisition of new clients. However, as I've previously discussed, both skill and consistency are needed to grow your sales territory through those avenues.

So, have you been making progress since our last podcast? In the last episode we spoke of several steps that need to be actively practiced, to improve your cold calling. If you've been practicing the tips shared, you're likely thinking about the next question: How do I keep a cold call warm?

Here's the scenario:

- You've done your research and identified your next new stockist in the suburb or town where you need to expand your brand's presence.
- You've researched their business and understand what they're most well known for.
- You've done your exploratory call – maybe by walking in with just a business card and your phone.
- You managed to meet with the owner and while you didn't get a commitment for a return appointment, you didn't get a No.

So, they're neither hot nor cold – so where to from here?

I get asked this question a lot during my team training events, along with:

- When do you call back?
- What to you focus on?
- What do you take in for the next call?

This is where you can win or lose a new account, especially with larger ones. There're basically two choices: you can play the short game, or you can go for the long game.

The Short Game

The short game plays out when you sniff some faint interest and as a result, you become the 'eager beaver.'

- Maybe, you call back the following week, saying you were in the area etc…
- Or maybe you call back with product samples and ask them to try this and that, or you drop off an information pack on your company and product.
- Perhaps you've called back on a different day of the week, missed the owner and then find yourself talking to a staff member who openly admits it's the owner who makes that sort of decision.
- You wind up frustrated, because you didn't leave the first call with a clear plan in mind and in hindsight, your notetaking after the call could have been better.

- So, you resort to phoning the salon the next week with the view of trying to line up a time to again see the owner. You call and ask for the owner by name, the receptionist becomes protective and advises you that the owner is with a client and that they'll leave a message to call you back.
- You wait all afternoon for that call, but It doesn't come. Unsure what to do, you call again the next day, albeit a bit tentatively, only to be greeted by the same receptionist and the same answer, they're with a client. You retreat
- Suddenly you feel that you've entered the chasing game and are uncertain what to do next.
- You drive home undecided and conflicted and maybe even feeling a bit dejected.

So, let's get back on track and see how you can stop playing the short game and shift your focus to playing the long game… and through that, see what went wrong and how you can fix it.

The Long Game

For me, the long game is simply taking a more pragmatic approach to planning out the steps you need to work through… to build trust and respect.

- Here, you meet a salon owner that you think are a fantastic fit for you and your brand. You feel you got on well and that they showed some genuine interest in your initial conversation…. You leave thinking how fantastic it's going to be when they become a client etc. Something switches inside and you and you find yourself thinking about the client throughout the day.
    - What's the best way to build a plan so we have lots of these experiences?
      'Call on them like they're a client, and they'll become a client'
        - The first step is to schedule them into you call planner (even though you don't have an appointment), considering the following:
            - What day the owner has off – did you find that out?
            - What day of the week will you be in that area or suburb?
        - Next, think about how you're going to keep them warm till you next meeting.
            - You could put them on your company newsletter list and monitor their email opens
            - You could connect with them via social media get to understand what they're posting, leaving the occasional comment about what they appear to be interested in. Careful though, don't become a stalker.
            - Or on a more personal level, you could consider sending them an email or a card to say thanks for meeting with you and you're looking forward to the next opportunity to meet.
        - Your goal is to create some activity and have a loose connection that keeps you top of mind. My preference is to touch base in some productive way, once a month.

- The next part of the plan is how you're going to re-engage when you next meet (considering you don't have an appointment). Your goal is to position yourself as someone who adds value, not someone who's just after their business.

So… 'How can you add value?'

Prior to your next call, make time to spend a few minutes reviewing their website, social media and to reacquaint yourself with their interests and direction. Then… you're going to find something that you can bring with you that talks to their area of interest – a piece that's going to be a conversation starter. It could be:

- A business story of a successful launch or expansion.
- Some market research or a futurist article you've read, that you feel may share an interesting message
- An article about a new treatment or technology
- A trade-based information piece about award wages changing, or something similar.

Some cautionary comments…
You may have noticed that in the above list, there's no information about you, your company or your product. My belief is that they expect you to come in all guns blazing (as other do), pushing your story and doing a big product push.

Instead, I want to be perceived as different – not for difference sake – rather I want them to see me as somebody who's interested in their business and in helping them to grow, regardless of whether they buy my product or not.

Therefore, my preference is to bring something with me instead of just posting a link or emailing it to them. WHY? Well I want the personal touch, plus I'm then physically connected to the delivery of the information. That gives me a purpose for my next face-to-face meeting. Even if I'm greeted by the receptionist, I have a way to demonstrate to both her and the owner that I'm interested in adding value.

And next…
So how do you deliver this information? Once the pleasantries are over, I like to introduce it with a key set of words… 'I saw this and thought of you.' Then I talk about what it was that made me think of them, when I came across the information piece.

I've used this respectful approach many times and it can be incredibly powerful – especially if it's a good piece of information or something that's relevant. If you pick your piece well and explain the key reason for selecting it, you'll find that your conversation with the prospective client will move to a different level. The other amazing thing you'll find, is that in most cases the conversation will eventually come around to you or your company – and it's usually initiated by the client (not you). That's the part I find most fascinating.

Now when they start asking about you and/or your company, you need to be careful that you don't revert to your 'telling' mode and start overdelivering information. Instead, stay in that 'curious' space and ask some questions around the topic raised.

- For example, if a question comes up like… "Do you guys cover that in your training programs?"
- Rather than jumping in and trying to answer it, I'd pull back and first ask a few genuine questions.
- My favourite is "Can you tell me a little bit more about that?"
- I love it when they start asking about what I want to tell them… hmmm that's gold.

Let's recap on today's episode…

Our overall topic has been building your sales territory through new business acquisition, resulting in opening more new accounts. This episode's focus was keeping those cold calls warm.

- We discussed the differences between the short game and the long game
- The short game is being the eager beaver and chasing after the bright new shiny object …versus…

- The long game is to plan your approach – by fitting them into your existing workload and geographical pattern (and by doing so, it allows for a lot more time to repeat the process with a lot more prospects).
- I encourage you to build a library of 'valuable pieces' that will stimulate great client conversations – you'll find it invaluable in keeping those cold calls warm.

Until next time… enjoy your day.

Drop by thesalescatalyst.com.au Email neil@thesalescatalyst.com.au Call +61 419 233 439
PO Box 748 Mona Vale NSW 2103 AUSTRALIA