

Transcript – GET to YES Podcast

E17: B2B When a Prospect Goes Quiet

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 resulting in opening more new accounts.

Today, we're covering what to do when a new account prospect goes quiet.

It's an experience that we've all had, at some point (or many) in our sales career. This time was last year, while I was doing on-road training with a new BDM in the Aesthetic industry. The day was set up to prospect the lower Northern Beaches of Sydney. BDM Jenny, had done an excellent job in following the plan, researching and shortlisting several businesses in the suburbs of Manly and Freshwater – resulting in a well prepared and planned day, of mostly cold calls.

I think we did about 12-15 cold calls that day and had managed to stimulate some great interest from the carefully selected list of potential clients. We stopped for a fresh juice towards the back end of the day as a recharge, before the last two cold calls of the day. Then it happened.

Here we were enjoying a fresh chilled juice in the beachside suburb of Manly (my juice had a hit of chilli, so I was upping the stimulus as I still had to get through the last two cold calls). Jenny was looking at her phone – as you do – scrolling through her emails and she let out a sigh and her shoulders dropped.

As a good sales coach I said, 'What's happened?' She looked up and tried to pull herself together but was obviously a little perturbed.

The story so far...

Jenny went on to explain that about 6-7 weeks ago, a lead had come in from her country territory. The prospective client had a large business, was wanting to upgrade some equipment and were interested in a new top of the line device – an expensive purchase.

The initial phone conversation had been thorough – lasting over an hour – with the client answering all Jenny's qualifying questions, plus the client asked all the right questions as well. It was obvious the client knew her stuff and they had quite a technical exchange... even down to the client asking how big the device was, obviously thinking through where it was going to go in the clinic.

The following day, Jenny had done the right thing by preparing a courteous email supported by several links to further technical information, including some financing options.

The following week the client had responded positively, now divulging that her husband was a doctor and she would be buying the device in his name and therefore finance would be assured and wouldn't be a problem.

Over the following weeks, there had been a few more email exchanges – with Jenny always answering the email within the same day – still very positive, with one email even discussing delivery dates.

In the meantime, Jenny had become quite excited, and had included this (still pending sale) on her month's forward forecast. Her boss had noticed it and had reached out to acknowledge Jenny's efforts on the sale so far.

As each week has passed, Jenny's percentage of certainly had increased on her pipeline reports. What was also exciting, was that it would be the first sale of this new device in Australia and therefore would attract a lot of attention across their internal network. PLUS, to get that sale in on top of what had already been a strong sales month... Jenny was in for a very sizable monthly commission payment. Between you and me, I think Jenny had already spend a large part of the pending commission.

Then it had happened...

As Jenny explained it, early in the week prior, she had received an email from the client that said she'd be back to Jenny by the end of the week to finalise. That was Friday of last week, and today was Thursday. Next Monday was the last day of the month – the last day where Jenny could close the sale and secure both her commissions and the recognition, she so desperately wanted.

I repeated my question, 'What's happened?'

Jenny looked up and responded...

Since early last week, the client had gone quiet. She hadn't answered Jenny's emails, which was unusual. She'd called her mobile, no answer. She'd even texted her two days ago and still no answer.

Jenny only had two more days to close the deal and she just didn't know what to do...

She felt like she was starting to stalk the client – which was not how she'd positioned herself. Jenny went on to explain that she felt they'd built a good relationship and she didn't want to break the trust with a traditional end-of-month email – you know the one... "You need to buy now, as I can't hold that price or deal past the end of the month"

Jenny had really bought into this client, however she felt she was now in a dangerous position. Should she apply sales pressure and hope for a possible win? Hmm.

Perhaps there was a real problem with the client's life and applying that sort of sales pressure may prevent Jenny from coming back with that favourable price next month, and therefore losing the deal altogether. Jenny was genuinely feeling uncomfortable on this deal.

She looked at me and asked, "What should I do?"

We discussed the options, considered several approaches and finally settled on a two-step approach.

Step 1:

Craft a short polite email, asking if the client still wanted to pursue the delivery date mentioned in the last email. If there was still no response, she'd resort to Plan B, which I'll explain shortly.

After we'd sent the initial polite email, I explained to Jenny about a quite different approach that a friend of mine, Ari, had used to great effect. After that, we then crafted another email, which we called the 'Dragon's Den' after the name of my chilli laden, fresh juice. Our plan was to wait a week into the new month and if there was still no communication from the client, Jenny would send the 'Dragon's Den' email.

Unfortunately, it played out that the client didn't respond to the brief email and was still off the grid that following week.

Step 2:

Jenny then implemented our Plan B, and she sent our 'Dragon's Den' email. Within an hour of sending the email, the client had responded!

She was quite apologetic to Jenny and explained that there had indeed been a few personal problems that had pulled her out of the business for a few weeks and that she really appreciated the way that Jenny had handled the sudden halt in communication.

More importantly, the client shared that she should be back on deck next week and at that point she'd pick up the pieces and get on with ordering the new device and organising the installation and training. So how did it all end up?

Well...

Jenny missed out on the big monthly commission. She was also a little bruised after a heavy conversation with her boss, about the need for accurate forward month forecasting.

However, the following month was also a strong sales month. A few of those cold calls in Manly had developed into sales and while it wasn't a record breaker of a month, having the new device sale come through had created a solid month with a respectable commission payment at the end.

In addition, Jenny's sales success was shared internationally, and volumes of congratulatory emails flooded in from all over the world.

So, what have you gleaned out of Jenny's experience?

Drop me a note... I'd love to hear.

And, if you'd like a copy of the Dragon's Den email send your request to neil@thesalescatalyst.com.au with Dragon's Den in the subject line.

However, beware...

It will come with some specific instructions. Please respect them, as it's not to be used lightly. It's very powerful and in a lot of cases, has been a real deal saver. Oh, and when you're next in Manly, visit Ground Zero café on the beach end of Sydney Rd and ask for a dragon's den juice – have it with chilli – it's got a real kick, it'll clear your head, and it works!

I look forward to hearing from you and until next time... enjoy your day.

