

THE RETAIL DOCTOR | BY BILLY CUTHRELL

The Worst Call of All

When I receive sales pitches over the phone, I often listen to the calls so I can dissect them. I put them on speakerphone, so my staff can listen in, too. My people usually don't make cold calls for sales but still conduct a lot of business via telephone.

Many of the salespeople I hear from do a decent job, but recently, a customer service rep from a cable company telephoned my cell to tell me about a special package. The call only lasted a minute, but it was the worst sales attempt I've ever heard. It went as follows:



Salesguy: Is this Mr. Qutrill?

Me: Yes, and it's Cuthrell.

Salesguy: (Short pause) Uh huh. What? How are you today, Mr. Qutrill?

Me: Good. It's pronounced "Cuthrell."

Salesguy: (Long pause, and lots of background noise) That's right. I was calling, Mr. Qutrill, because we see you've been a longtime customer, and we want to tell you about some special packages ... we have put together that we think can save you some money. (Long pause) Do you like to save money, Mr. Qutrill?

Me: Yes.

Salesguy: What?

Me: Yes, I like to save money. Don't you?

Salesguy: We see you have cable and Internet through us. Um, if you bundle your, uh, home phone with us, we can help you save on ... Mr. Qutrill?

Me: Yes?

Salesguy: You like your home phone?

Me: We don't have a home phone.

Salesguy: How, um, did I call you then?

Me: You called my cell phone.

Salesguy: Yeah. Well, thanks and have a good day.

Disconnect.

Successful sales calls are easy to master and only have a few basic components. Let's look at six ways this salesperson could have done a better job.

1. If you're unsure about a customer's name, ask if you've said it correctly. If you haven't, apologize for mispronouncing it. My name isn't easy to pronounce, but it's not that hard once

you hear it. The tone of your voice can break the ice, as well, so be polite and cheerful.

2. Make sales calls in a quiet place where you're free from distractions. Turn your cell phone to vibrate, or better yet, turn it off completely, so you're not distracted by incoming calls and texts.

3. Pay attention to your customers' responses. Remember: You are asking them to spend money with you, so *listen* to them, and do so without long, awkward pauses.

4. Don't read directly from a script. If you have to because of company policy, try to memorize it. Speak clearly and in a relaxed fashion. No slang words or "text talk."

5. Know the product you're selling. I busted a salesguy once when he went on and on about a product. After Googling it, I found out it didn't do half the things he claimed it did.

6. Watch for missed opportunities. The sales rep missed a prime chance to sign me up for a home phone. He could have said, "If you don't have a home phone, that's not a problem. I'll be happy to explain why our home phone service is the best there is and explain the big savings you'll get by having your services bundled through us." **MI**

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Six ways to improve an especially horrible telephone sales pitch