

GUIDE.

TOP TIPS:

...for getting past the Gatekeeper.



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THE PARETO EFFECT

INTRODUCTION

No matter how high-end your product or how experienced you are at selling, your pitch can easily fade into insignificance when at the mercy of the dreaded gatekeeper. The main obstacle between reaching your end goal and getting through to the decision maker, many naturally feel the frustration when repeatedly failing to deliver a knockout business proposition.

Pitching over the phone leaves you exposed, without body language, facial expressions or the ability to use your natural charisma, leaving the call to go one of many ways. If you're serious about succeeding with your sales pitch, there are many things you need to consider for your approach. Check out our top tips for getting past the gatekeeper.

1 GO IN ARMED

'Fail to prepare, prepare to fail'. A gatekeeper will recognise a lazy, generic sales pitch a mile off. By failing to know the name of your desired contact, you'll likely be rejected in seconds. Make sure that you familiarise yourself with what the company does and research any latest news surrounding their activities.

During the call, mention a referral or name from a trusted source. This will build trust with the gatekeeper and help convince them that you have the right to be heard. One reason you won't be put through is if the gatekeeper doesn't believe or understand enough about what you do. Be prepared to really sell your business to them.

2 BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

Believing in your selling technique will greatly increase your confidence in the success of the call, therefore putting you in the correct mind frame. Feel determined that you have what it takes to be put through and you'll start to feel positive about securing an appointment. Convince them that they NEED to meet you.

Self-belief is an important trait to have here. Either practice your pitch out loud or request refresher training if you feel you need it. To effectively increase your chances of getting past the gatekeeper, set yourself a minimum target of calls per week to allow you to stay sharp and increase your chances of success. Cold-calling practice will lead you to face many eventualities, giving you the chance to improve your technique and begin to really believe in your own ability.

3 ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING

Try to sound personable, friendly and positive on the call, as this can be contagious. Basic manners will also go a long way, as will namechecking. It shows you are listening to the gatekeeper from the beginning of the call. By making casual conversation about the weather or their day, you can start to build a good rapport, influencing their decision to put you through. Go in with the right mentality and a large dose of optimism and you'll stand yourself in good stead, sounding personal and unique from every other cold-caller.

Even if you strike up a positive relationship with them and they don't put you through, they may decide to put you through to their manager's voicemail if they're busy. This isn't always a preferred form of initial contact but, if you're lucky, the manager may repeat their mobile number within their voicemail message. Now you have the manager's direct number and an opportunity to present your winning pitch!

4 BE STRATEGIC

Successfully navigating past the gatekeeper isn't just about what you say, but what you do. Becoming strategic comes with experience, and there's many ingenious ways you can reach the decision maker.

One thing you could do is to change the last two digits of the switchboard number when phoning which should put you through to a random extension. All you'd need to do then is to ask that individual to put you through. Using the internet to your advantage, you can also try to figure out the email of the decision-maker - taking into account their name and company then adding .tel at the end.



This tells Google to look for any telephone numbers associated with that particular name and email address, and around 10-20% of the time it returns direct dials and mobile numbers.

If you're really struggling to get through after repeated attempts, try calling and pitching to other senior members in the business. You can never be sure how much influence HR Managers or Finance Directors have, and if they like what you've pitched them, they may well recommend a meeting with your desired decision maker.

5 TIMING IS KEY

Catching the gatekeeper at a good time can make all the difference to your success. As most people are in a good mood on a Friday afternoon, this could be a good time to try your luck. Not only will the gatekeeper be feeling less irritable when it comes to receiving sales calls, but the impending weekend will offer a positive conversation topic.

The 9 before 9 rule is a popular technique. In a business, the most senior members of staff are more readily available outside of strict working hours. Try calling between 8.15am-9am when the working day hasn't yet begun and the gatekeeper feels that their boss has more time to take your call. The decision-maker can also be one of the last people to leave the office, so calling between 5-6pm or even later could increase your chance of getting through.

6 MAKE YOUR PITCH INFORMAL

Plan your call, but don't follow a script. The gatekeeper will hear it in the tone of your voice, and you can easily get side tracked, then stutter and stumble. Prepare responses to key objections and try to sound like each call you make is the first call of the day. Alter your intonation to avoid sounding monotone, and again try to get your personality across with a personal touch.

Don't treat the gatekeeper as just a passive receiver; treat them as a human and try to relate to them. If you deliver a persuasive pitch finished with a joke or something individual, then they may be more willing to offer their assistance. The gatekeeper may not put you through, but if a good relationship is formed then they could give you valuable information to help you in future: maybe a direct number, the best times to call or the easiest way to get in touch.

7 BE REACTIVE

No two sales calls will be the same and, contrary to popular belief, there's always ways to turn a bad call around. No matter which senior member you're trying to be put through to, you'll often need to call on your 'gift of the gab' and ability to improvise.

If asked what the call is regarding, you could make it sound as though you've had past contact with them, stating you've had a prior conversation with the individual. Respond to any interrogating questions as naturally as possible, as if it's a personal call. This would be supported by requesting the decision maker by first name; so, "Hi, it's Joe Bloggs, is Paul in?"

8 DON'T QUIT!

Too many people give up after a few knockbacks. You might not always get put through first time. Remember that everybody has a bad day, so if refused, call back at a different time in the week.

If you've been informed that the decision-maker is out of the office, find out what time they are back in. If the gatekeeper seems willing and obliging to pass on your call, tell them that you'll send over an outlook invitation to call your desired contact back when they return that day. Remember to not let any knockbacks get you down, and if at first you don't succeed, try, try again.

CONCLUSION

To get whatever you want in life, you've got to be persistent. Remember not to view the gatekeeper as the enemy; as their main purpose is not to just reject sales calls.

So, if you're confident that your business can help them, then it will come across in your pitch. One thing to always remember is that with training and experience, you'll discover the best way of pitching for you.

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