



ACQUISITIONS

Sales Cheer After the Holidays

Phone prospecting for new customers in a new year

Now that the holiday season is behind you, it's time to take a deep breath. It's also time to get out with full force to let your clients know just what you have in store for them in the coming year. The turn of the new year offers everyone a do-over on all the things we wished we did (or did more of) last year. If you're serious about growth this year, consider the often-overlooked method of active phone prospecting. There are three critical elements in a prospecting call.

Utilize the Team to Get in the Door

Despite the fact that December's busy time is behind us, the dentist won't come to the phone most of the time anyway. Under these circumstances, the goal of the initial phone call is to utilize the office manager or whoever sets up meetings for the dentist. This is a great time of year to utilize this contact as a liaison—treat them as if they are a decision-maker. These administrators are the “gatekeepers” for the dentist and are your key to securing meetings under these circumstances. The key is your phraseology. As such, if they indicate that they are involved in the process of selecting the laboratory (whether or not it is true), invite them to a meeting. This can be accomplished by asking, “When are you and the dentist available to meet over the coming week?” Including the gatekeeper shows consideration, regardless of the administrator's level of influence. However, it's very important that, when you are able to make an appointment, you don't hang up without solidifying the mutual understanding that you expect the dentist to have time for the meeting, regardless of whether the office manager is part of it or not.

Asking the Right Questions

Whether in person or over the phone, the best

sales presentation is one that includes lots of questions—not only to demonstrate your own expertise, but also to encourage opportunities to offer a solution based on their answers. For example, a sales representative may ask: “Tell me what kind of improvements you'd like to see with your current laboratory work.” Get down to specifics with the dentist about turnaround time, technology, marginal integrity, quality of work, and customer opinion.

Having the Right Answers

It's one thing to ask smart questions; it's another thing to know what to do with the answers. Ask implicative needs-analysis questions to gracefully match your own features and benefits to their needs. Imply your solution in the question itself to elicit actual pain points, allowing you to easily direct the potential client to your unique solutions. For example, you may ask the office manager, “Does the dentist do a fair amount of implants?” Then, once you've made a case that they are more in need of a quality laboratory than they thought, continue, “Well, we specialize in



implants and can even work chairside to help with specialty cases,” and so on.

Some laboratory owners have said things like,

“I have more success going door-to-door, so why would I want to pick up the phone?” You can spend all day driving to offices and sitting in waiting rooms for 20+ minutes each, only to be told after 3 minutes, “We're good, but thank you.” Or you do what many of the most successful laboratories do: you can assure that you have warm, pre-qualified, reliable meetings set up for yourself ahead of time, and meet with a dentist who has expressed urgency that will range from “passively curious” to “right-place-right-time.” In utilizing the phone to get these meetings, we must still have reasonable expectations. It will still take some hours to get each warm, pre-qualified meeting set up. But you can cover a lot more ground if you have a strategy that includes using the phone with the intention of getting an invitation in the door.

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