

The Opening Statement

Nothing is more important to prospecting (other than actually doing it) than the quality of your opening statement. In person or over the phone, windows of attention are typically slammed shut in less than 10 seconds. This means you have to maximize the impact of every word, syllable and pause in your lead off statements. They need to be works of art-compelling to the extreme degree.

Fortunately, opening statements can be prepared and practiced before a sales opportunity is ever pursued (a sales professional is always prepared). Below are some guidelines and thoughts for creating your opening statement(s) as well as some samples for you to rework into your sales world. Print it out... work through it with your team or make it a professional development project over the coming weekend. If active prospecting is a part of your sales world, you're responsible for making your prospects want to engage with you over the 10 to 20 other people who call on them each day. This is your guide to creating the opening statement...

a professional's opening statement...the objective, create immediate interest for further discussion... engage the prospect

method, work through the following using pen to paper or fingers to keyboard...

what do I sell? (answer in the fewest words possible)

how do my customers benefit (both the prospect and the prospect's company) when they buy my product/ service? (shoot for as many true benefits as you can)

build several opening statements for the different scenarios you might face (e.g., catching a decision maker without a screener, catching a decision maker "on their way out the door", delivering the opening statement to a screener who insists on knowing "what it is in reference to?", for voice mail, etc.)... address each of the following in whatever order seems most appropriate for your particular sales world (just make sure the benefit to your prospect is mentioned within the first 10 seconds)...

- who you are
- where you're from (i.e. company name)
- what you sell (in very simple terms)

how your prospect will benefit from your product or service
a question to gauge interest of the prospect

Keep in mind

maximize every word, syllable and pause
the opening statement is not meant to close a prospect
never leave a misleading or vague voice mail message- hit them with your complete and prepared opening (it should be short enough)
never use industry jargon or unnecessary thousand dollar words
avoid vagueness

Words to consider using in your opening statement

maximize, increase, grow [sales, customer retention, productivity, etc.]
minimize, reduce, decrease, eliminate [expenses, customer service challenges, diversions, etc.]
profit from
specific, specifically
save, conserve
accumulate, acquire
prevent
fully
immediate, now

Phrases to avoid in your opening statement

these phrases may be used at other times during the sales process, but they have no place in the opening statement because they do not create immediate attention or encourage the prospect to engage with you. (something to add?)

how are you today?
i'd like to learn a little more about your business to determine...
we're the leading provider of...
we work with several of your competitors...
i'd like to see if there are some ways we might work together
is now a good time to talk?
did I catch you at a bad time?

Sample opening statements

hi, [first name]... we provide [product/ service] in order to help people [take advantage of, minimize, maximize, prevent, etc.] [something of importance]... I'm calling to see if this might be helpful to [you/ and of your clients]...

hi, [first name]... this is [sales name] with xyz company... we provide [product/ service] in order to help companies minimize their [whatever] expenses and maximize monthly sales revenue... I'm calling to see if this might be valuable to you and your team...

hi, [first name]... [sales name] with xyz company... we help companies fully profit from their existing resources through our [product/ service] that [does/ has/ have whatever differentiating point or feature]... I'm calling to see if you'd be interested in discussing how it might help your

[whatever] efforts/ initiatives...

hi, [first name]... [sales name], xyz company... we deliver [product/ service] which might be able to save you more than [specific percentage] on your [whatever] expenses... would you be interested in discussing how it might fit into your environment?