



TELEPHONE TALK – SALES TECHNIQUES

PODCAST LESSON

Introduction

Telephone selling forms a major part of many companies' sales strategy. Some people find the technique comes naturally but for others it is very difficult and they need to make a conscious effort to develop the necessary skills.

In this podcast lesson we're going to look at some sales techniques you might use when receiving a telephone enquiry from a potential customer.

The Situation

You're now going to listen in on a telephone conversation between a potential customer and a sales representative. The customer telephones the company because he is interested in purchasing some equipment.

Dialogue

RECEPTION:	Advanced Design Ltd. Good morning.
CUSTOMER:	Good morning. Could I speak to someone about purchasing some equipment from you, please?
RECEPTION:	Yes. I'll put you through to our Sales Department.
SALES:	May Hui, Sales Department. Can I help you?
CUSTOMER:	Oh yes. I hope so . My name's Mr Smith of GPF Limited ... er ... we need some supplies for our Design Office.
SALES:	I see. What sort of things are you looking for, Mr Smith?
CUSTOMER:	Well, first of all, we need one complete new drawing board.
SALES:	Well, in the standard range we have the D044 and the D045 models.
CUSTOMER:	Oh ... what's the difference between them?
SALES:	Well, the D045 has its own lighting system and it does cost slightly more, as a result.
CUSTOMER:	So what's the total price?
SALES:	For the D045 it's HK\$5,790.
CUSTOMER:	Mmm ... what exactly are the boards made of?
SALES:	Well, they have a plywood base with a high quality, scratch-resistant finish .

- CUSTOMER:** OK. Can you tell me how long it takes to deliver?
- SALES:** I can't give a **definite** date now, I'm afraid, because it **depends on** the other orders we have to get out but it would certainly be within three weeks.
- CUSTOMER:** OK. Now, we also want some drawing pens, ink and **erasing** fluid and ... er ... some drawing paper.
- SALES:** Ah ... now the lady who **deals with** drawing office supplies isn't here this morning, I'm afraid, but I'll ask her to give you a ring this afternoon, if you like.
- CUSTOMER:** Oh yes. Thank you.
- SALES:** What is your telephone number, Mr Smith?
- CUSTOMER:** It's 2894 3838 extension 501.
- SALES:** OK. I'll get Miss Leung to ring you this afternoon. Now, would you like me to place an order for one D045 drawing board?
- CUSTOMER:** Yes please, if you would.
- SALES:** Delivery and invoice to your address in Nathan Road, Tsimshatsui - is that right?
- CUSTOMER:** Yes, that's it. Thank you very much **indeed**. You've been most helpful. Goodbye.
- SALES:** Goodbye Mr Smith.

Debrief

At a place of business, a receptionist will usually answer the phone, directing the caller to the appropriate individual. Often, the first words a receptionist says when she answers the phone will be the name of the company or business. This situation's opener is a perfect example:

Advanced Design Ltd. Good morning.

The customer then begins the conversation:

Good morning. Could I speak to someone about purchasing some equipment from you, please?

"Good morning" is a salutation or greeting. And, on the telephone, a salutation is a very good way to begin a conversation with somebody you do not know. Other salutations are:

Good morning.
Good afternoon.
Good evening.



Also notice that when the customer asks to speak to someone about purchasing, he does not say “I want to speak to someone...” or “Let me speak to someone...” Instead he uses an indirect question, a formal and polite way to ask for something. Other ways you can say this would be:

Do you think I could talk to someone in purchasing, please?
Would it be possible to talk to someone in purchasing, please?

The receptionist connects the customer to the sales department.

May Hui, Sales Department. Can I help you?

The first thing the sales department representative says is her name.

Remember “What do you want?” is a much too impolite way to ask a customer a question, so May instead uses an indirect question. Another way you could say this would be:

What can I do for you?
How may I help you?
Is there anything I can do for you?

The customer identifies himself and his company, saying:

Oh yes. I hope so. My name's Mr. Smith of GPF Limited ... er ... we need some supplies for our Design Office.

She then asks:

I see. What sort of things are you looking for, Mr. Smith?

When May says “I see,” she is telling Mr. Smith that she understands his reason for calling. She could also say:

Very good.
I understand.
Well, I hope I can help you.

Mr. Smith then answers:

Well, first of all, we need one complete new drawing board.

He tells her his business needs a “new drawing board.” However, he has also said “first of all,” which lets May know that he needs more than one thing. To save time, Mr. Smith should tell May how many things he needs. Or he could just give a very short list of what he needs like:

I need four items. I hope you have them.

OR

Well, I am looking for a drawing board, some marking pens, drawing paper and erasing fluid.

May tells him what kind of drawing boards she has:

Well, in the standard range we have the D044 and the D045 models.

And Mr. Smith asks:

Oh ... what's the difference between them?

May goes on and explains the differences by giving Mr. Smith the 'specs', which means the specifications or details, of the items.

Well, the D045 has its own lighting system and it does cost slightly more, as a result.

After giving the specs, Mr. Smith asks:

So what's the total price?

Mr. Smith's question is not clear because he is asking the total price without saying which drawing board he wants.

The word "total" means "everything together".

So if Mr. Smith didn't say he wanted ONE drawing board, May could have easily believed that he wanted BOTH drawing boards just because he used the word "total."

May tells him the price of the last drawing board she was talking about:

For the D045 it's HK\$5,790.

Mr. Smith considers what May has told him and then asks what kinds of materials the drawing boards are made of:

Mmm ... what exactly are the boards made of?

And May gives more specs:

Well, they have a plywood base with a high quality, scratch-resistant finish.

Mr. Smith agrees by saying "OK" and then asks:

OK. Can you tell me how long it takes to deliver?

Here we see that Mr. Smith agrees. But what is he agreeing to? Is he agreeing to buy ONE drawing board? Or is he agreeing to buy TWO drawing boards? More likely he is saying "OK" because he is clear with all of the specs.

After Mr. Smith asks about delivery, May then answers:

I can't give a definite date now, I'm afraid, because it depends on the other orders we have to get out but it would certainly be within three weeks.

Often, questions about delivery usually come after a customer has decided that this indeed is the product they want. We still do not know which drawing board Mr. Smith wants.

Mr. Smith then continues his order, saying:

OK. Now, we also want some drawing pens, ink and erasing fluid and ... er ... some drawing paper.

Only NOW has Mr. Smith made known exactly what he wants.

May then responds:

Ah ... now the lady who deals with drawing office supplies isn't here this morning, I'm afraid, but I'll ask her to give you a ring this afternoon, if you like.

Notice the way May tells Mr. Smith that she does not deal with the sale of these items.

She does say "I do not deal with those items". Instead, she tells him that she will contact the lady who does and have her call him.

"I'm afraid" is an expression which means "something is not possible" right now. (It can also mean it might NEVER be possible.) Other ways you can express something is not possible could be:

I'm sorry. At this time that might not be an option. (Maybe this can happen later.)

I'm afraid that we cannot do this at this time. (Maybe this can happen later.)

I hope you understand but this is not possible at this point in time. (Unlikely this will happen later.)

Mr. Smith confirms to May that he would like to be called by the lady who deals with office supplies:

Oh yes. Thank you.

Remember, it is always good to say "thank you" when somebody offers to do something for you.



May asks Mr. Smith for his telephone number so the office supplies lady can call him:

What is your telephone number, Mr. Smith?

And he gives this information, saying:

It's 2894 3838 extension 501.

Remember, you should always be sure to give your extension number when you want somebody to call you back.

May gives the name of the lady who will call and then gets back to the business of the drawing board, confirming the model she believes is the one Mr. Smith wants:

OK. I'll get Miss Leung to ring you this afternoon. Now, would you like me to place an order for one D045 drawing board?

May's belief that Mr. Smith wanted the D045 drawing board is correct as he says:

Yes please, if you would.

Other ways you can say this would be:

Yes, thank you, I would appreciate that.
Yes, I would, thank you very much.

May makes sure that she has the correct address and then verifies it with Mr. Smith asking:

Delivery and invoice to your address in Nathan Road, Tsimshatsui - is that right?

Obviously, May has the address of Mr. Smith's company, GPF Limited, in her computer. But it is always good to be sure, so the client is assured that the order will indeed come to him. Another acceptable tag question could be:

...Nathan Road, Tsimshatsui – correct?

Mr. Smith confirms it's correct, answering:

Yes, that's it. Thank you very much indeed. You've been most helpful.
Goodbye.

He closes the conversation with a friendly tone, noting May's helpfulness.

And May confirms that the conversation is completed by saying:



Goodbye Mr. Smith.

That's all for this podcast lesson. We hope you enjoyed listening. Don't forget to print out the podcast transcript from our website.