5 Proven Strategies To Overcome Sales Call Reluctance That Every Salesperson Needs To Know To Win More Sales

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Defining the costs of sales call reluctance

I’ve suffered from it, and our research suggests many, if not most of us in sales, although we may not readily admit it, also suffer from sales contact initiation avoidance, otherwise known as call reluctance.

Call reluctance isn’t just a reluctance to make ‘cold’ sales calls over the phone. It’s the reluctance or hesitation or discomfort that salespeople can experience when needing to complete any of the wide range of sales and marketing activities that are essential to short, medium and long terms sales success.

The biggest problem with call reluctance is that it sneaks up on you without you even realizing it, and the first that you become aware of it, is when you’re not reaching your weekly, monthly, quarterly or annual sales targets – and for most of us in sales, that means less money in our pockets.

Before I start to discuss how to manage and overcome any sales call reluctance that you might have, let’s really define what it is and when it can strike.
A Motivational Model

Let me start with this simple motivational model, because if we’re going to talk about overcoming sales call reluctance and fix any sales contact initiation avoidance behaviour we need to also ensure that our competence or sales skills will work for us to achieve our success.

\[
\text{SKILLS} + \text{KNOWLEDGE} + \text{ATTRIBUTES) \times MOTIVATION = PERFORMANCE POTENTIAL}
\]

As you can see, this motivational model has five components.

The first is skills.

How would you rate your skills as a salesperson? This could include your communication skills, negotiation skills, your skill at building rapport, asking questions, showing value, identifying and handling obstacles and objections, closing and confirming sales and your skills to stay in touch to create advocates. Let me ask you again, how would you rate your sales skills – give yourself a score between 1 being low and 10 being high.
The second component is knowledge.

How would you rate your knowledge as a salesperson? This could include your product knowledge, industry knowledge, competitor knowledge, and client knowledge. Just as an aside, many salespeople have a database of their clients, however this doesn’t equate to them having a high understanding of their clients. What about you? How would you rate your knowledge as a salesperson? Give yourself a score between 1 and 10.

The third is attributes.

Our attributes are all of the other traits that we possess, other than our skills and knowledge. Our attitude, our personality, our resilience, our values and personal philosophy are all elements of our attributes. How would you rate your attributes as a salesperson (this is a little tougher to rate, but give yourself a score between one and ten).

O.K. So now you’ve rated yourself in the first three components of the motivational model – your skills, knowledge and attributes. Now add them up to arrive at your competency score. So your competency score will be the sum total of your skills, knowledge and attributes.
The fourth is motivation itself.

If I asked you how you would describe the work motivation, I wonder if you’d think of descriptors such as energy, drive, fire-in-the-belly, reason, purpose, consequence, inspiration and words similar to these. Let me now ask you to rate your motivation as a salesperson, again between one and ten.

The fifth is Performance Potential.

Now what I’d like you to do is to multiply whatever your competency score was (you’ll remember we added our scores for skills, knowledge and attributes), multiply that competency score by your motivation score. So for example, if you scored 21 as your competency score (an average of seven for your skills, knowledge and attributes) and you scored a seven for your motivation as a salesperson, you multiply 7 x 21 to give you a result of 147 as your Performance Potential Score. This is our fifth component in the motivational model – our performance potential.

And here’s why I’ve spent this time outlining it to you.
Your motivation is at the core of any salesperson’s call reluctance or sales contact initiation. In fact, your call reluctance levels as a salesperson can eat away at your motivation and success.

Let’s continue with the motivational model for a moment. Consider what happens if your skills, knowledge and attributes remain as they are. But what happens if your motivation drops to zero? Zero multiplied by your competency score gives you a performance potential score of zero.

So although you’ve still got the skills, knowledge and attributes that are ideally sufficient to enable you to be successful in selling, your motivational levels can drastically (both positively and negatively) impact your performance potential.

**Key Questions**

The questions then become how does call reluctance affect your motivation, when can it affect it and most importantly, what can you do about it?

Let’s deal with the first question…..How does call reluctance affect your motivation?
Call reluctance starts with our inner thoughts (we may or may not be consciously aware of the thoughts) about a certain sales or marketing activity. If it is a strong negative thought, it will cause us to emotionally and physically respond negatively. Emotionally we would become anxious, hesitant, concerned, worried or even angry.

These emotional feelings can cause a range of physical responses such as our pulse rate increasing, our stomach feeling queasy, nervous twitches, headaches or nausea. Now that all sounds pretty serious, but remember I’m talking about high levels of sales call reluctance here, and I’ll give you some specific examples shortly.

So these inner thoughts we can have will affect our feelings (emotionally and physically) and if those emotional and physical feelings are negative enough, they will cause us to potentially act in certain negative ways, resulting in us either not doing very well at completing a specific sales or marketing activity, or avoiding the activity altogether.

And remember, this can occur despite the fact that we may have the competence, skills, knowledge and attributes to successfully complete the sales and marketing activities.

How many sales might you be missing out on, because of some unintentional avoidance behaviour or poor application of your sales skills, all due to sales call reluctance?
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The answer to this question is quite simple and potentially disturbing. Sales call reluctance can occur with any specific sales and marketing activity – not just telephone cold calls, which is what traditional call reluctance was related to.

What if this is happening to you......
......and you’re not even aware of it?

What if you have negative thoughts, apprehension, anxiousness, concern or even fear with any of the following vital sales and marketing activities?

1. Telephone calls to potential clients to try to gain an appointment
2. Telephone calls to existing clients to deliver some bad news
3. Meeting potential clients for the first time
4. Asking probing questions
5. Public speaking
6. Negotiation price and terms
7. Closing sales
8. Asking for referrals
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These are eight of the most reported sales and marketing activities that our research suggests many salespeople have varying degrees of sales call reluctance or sales contact initiation avoidance.

One way to determine whether you might suffer from sales call reluctance that could potentially be holding you back from even greater success than you’re currently achieving, is to do this quick exercise.

For each of the eight sales and marketing activities that I’ve just mentioned, as honestly as you will allow yourself to be, give yourself a comfort level rating between one and ten (one being low comfort level and ten being highly comfortable).

Here they are again on the following page for you to do the rating activity.
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Sales & Marketing Activity

1. Telephone calls to potential clients to try to gain an appointment
2. Telephone calls to existing clients to deliver some bad news
3. Meeting potential clients for the first time
4. Asking probing questions
5. Public speaking
6. Negotiation price and terms
7. Closing sales
8. Asking for referrals

If you’ve scored yourself low in your comfort level in completing any of the sales and marketing activities, then you may be suffering from levels of sales call reluctance that could impact on your success.

So......what to do about it?

This brings us to the main purpose of this SalesCoachCentral Sounding Board Report – 5 Proven Strategies To Overcome Sales Call Reluctance.
As I outline each of these five strategies, I want to share with you that I have in the past and every now and then still revert back to needing to apply these in my own sales and marketing pursuits. They have and continue to work for me, and I am confident that they will work for you too.

**Strategy One: Just Do It!**

There’s an old adage ‘practice makes perfect’. I really like that wisdom. One way to overcome sales call reluctance, is despite your feelings, emotional and physical, about doing a certain sales and marketing activity, is to suck it in and just get on and do it anyway.

The more you just do it, the more you practice it, ideally the better you will get at it, and the more comfortable you’ll be at approaching and completing the sales and marketing activity.

For example, if you’re afraid of public speaking, look for as many opportunities to speak in public (team meetings, community events and sales presentations to a group of clients) and just do it.

Easy to say, and for some, this is sufficient. What about you? Can you just suck it in and get to it?
If not, one of the following four strategies to manage or overcome sales call reluctance will be of value to you.

**Strategy Two: Choose an effective alternative.**

This may seem like avoidance behavior, and it is. However, sometimes, depending on the sales and marketing activity, there may be other equally effective ways to achieve the same goal.

For example, rather than making cold calls on the telephone yourself, perhaps you’re in a position where you could hire someone else to do it for you. Other than making cold calls you could conduct a series of prospecting seminars or presentations. Perhaps you could align yourself with affiliates who have different products and services to yourself or in a different industry, but whose clients could also want or need your products and services. Your affiliates refer their clients to you, and you refer your clients to the affiliates. Perhaps utilizing a more productive web marketing strategy could take the place for the need for you to cold call.

Please don’t misunderstand what I’m suggesting here.
I’m not saying to avoid cold calling – especially if it is a proven method of sales lead generation in your industry. However, if you’re suffering from large levels of sales call reluctance in this area, perhaps combining strategy one (just do it) with strategy two (choose an effective alternative) could be a more productive approach.

**Strategy Three: Affirmations**

That which we repeat to ourselves over and over, and that we truly want to achieve, has a higher likelihood, within the realms of actual possibility, of becoming a reality.

The topic of affirmations and *cognitive control strategies* is a huge topic that is actually at the centre of all that we think, feel, act and achieve. Far too large a topic for this Sounding Board Report. However, if you’ve never given affirmations a chance, maybe now is a good time to try or to try again.

An affirmation is a positive statement written in first person present tense, about a specific thought, feeling, action or outcome that you want to achieve.

For example, many years ago, one level of call reluctance that I experienced was in following up on leads immediately. My manager at the time suggested that I write the following affirmation and repeat it to myself:
“My life is full of opportunities. When opportunity knocks.....I take action!”

Now, depending on your level of cynicism, you may tune out now, but I urge you not to. The reality is, and you intuitively know this to be true.....that which we say over and over to ourselves affects our behaviour.

That affirmation, and it’s only one of many that I have used successfully in my life, through repetition, reinforcement and reward, helped me to become a better decision maker and removed my propensity (over time) to procrastinate. If you’d like to learn more on this, I’d recommend the classic Napoolean Hill book “Think and Grow Rich”.

What affirmations could you write down, present tense, first person and positive, to help you overcome an area of call reluctance that might be holding you back from the success you deserve?

**Strategy Four: Relaxation**

We can teach ourselves many things....sometimes we teach ourselves positive things that create positive habits that create positive outcomes.
However, the reverse of this can be true as well.

What if we’ve taught ourselves to be anxious or stressed or apprehensive about certain sales and marketing activities? What if we could become more relaxed and clear thinking about these activities? Well if you learn to relax, you can.

Just what do I mean by learning to relax?

This is a strategy that elite athletes and professional performers have been using for years and it works for salespeople too.

Buy yourself a relaxation tape – one where the audio steps you through a series of thoughts and physical activities to help you relax (I have recorded one for SalesCoachCentral members and you can locate it in the Multi-Media Download Centre).

As you’re listening and completing each of the relaxation tasks, create an inner connection of the relaxing feeling with either a piece of music or a scent. For example, you would have seen top sports people listening to their favorite motivational music just before a competition to them into the ‘zone’.

This is similar.
By connecting the music or scent (for example an essential oil or fragrance) to the feeling of relaxation, when you’re about to do the sales and marketing activity that you’re currently uncomfortable with and a bit stressed about, if you were to play the music or smell the essential oil, it can help you *reconnect* with the relaxing feeling.

Once again, depending on your level of cynicism, you might not relate to this strategy – although it does work, I know that many people won’t try it…..it’s a bit of a pity.

**Strategy Five: Redefine Selling**

Perhaps the most important strategy to overcome any form of call reluctance is to redefine what selling is in such a way to enable you to be inspired to complete all the necessary sales and marketing activities.

Check your true belief about what selling is with the following definition…..“Selling is a process of building trust relationships with the aim to create reciprocal value on a continual basis.”

If we truly believe that selling is never something we’re doing to people, and always something that we’re applying to create value for others, knowing that when we do create value for others that we too will receive value in return, this provides us with a noble purpose
that will inspire us to seek and communicate with potential and existing clients and take away any negative thoughts and feelings that would cause us to adapt avoidance behaviour.

Do you have a process of selling that is client value focused? Do you build rapport, ask questions, show value, identify and manage obstacles and objections, confirm the sale and stay in touch to create new, repeat and referral business?

If you’re not implementing and have strong beliefs in the value of a sales process like the BASICS of selling, there’s a big chance that your call reluctance could become stronger and you will lose sales.

So there you have it. Five proven strategies to help you deal with call reluctance. As a Sounding Board Topic, I know that we’ve only scraped the surface, however, I trust that you’ve gained value.

SalesCoachCentral Ask The Experts Audio Series

On SalesCoachCentral I will be interviewing a number of experts in each of the strategies covered in this report to overcome sales call reluctance....so stay tuned and keep a look out for what's new and what's already available in the self assessment centre, problem solving centre and multi-media download centre.
Remember, SalesCoachCentral has been designed with you in mind and we’re constantly looking for what else you’d like to see on the site so that you can access it to help you sell more comfortably, confidently, consistently and commercially.

I trust that you’ve gained value from this SalesCoachCentral® Sounding Board Report, and as always, I welcome any comments or feedback that you might have on this or any other future topic that can help you and other sales professionals sell more comfortably, confidently, consistently and commercially.

Until next time.....my very best to you and good selling.

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