



E-LESSON #26: How to Overcome Call Reluctance

GENERAL AGENDA

HOW TO OVERCOME CALL RELUCTANCE

By Paul Weyland

Even though it's illogical, given the nature of our business, every salesperson at one time or another experiences a phenomenon called *CALL RELUCTANCE*. Call reluctance means exactly what it says...that for some reason, you are simply reluctant to make client calls. In other words, you just don't feel like getting in the car or picking up the telephone to contact clients.

Call reluctance is the single biggest obstacle in getting more local direct accounts on the air. It's not our ratings. It's not our price structure. It's not the other stations. It's not the program or the format. It's not the economy. Those are just the excuses. The single biggest reason we're not billing more local direct on our stations is that we're not getting out of the station and calling on accounts.

In this section we'll discuss effective ways to deal with call reluctance. If you're struggling with making calls right now this lesson will help get you off your rear-end and back out on the street where you belong. If you haven't experienced call reluctance, this section will help you recognize the signs and save you time and money should it ever happen to you. And chances are it will. Watch out for it, because call reluctance tends to sneak up on you.

For some sellers call reluctance is a way of life. Some sales people would rather spend a day doing anything other than making in-person sales calls to local direct accounts. So they invent other things to keep themselves busy. This is called "busywork".

Don't confuse effort with production

In this business, if you've stopped calling on clients, that means one of two things. Either you are doing so well that you don't have another waking minute to call on one more client (congratulations!), or you're in big trouble. And, you're in trouble if you'd rather sit in front of the computer, visit with the people down the hall or go shopping than call on customers.

How can any of those thousands of businesses in your signal coverage area do business with you, if you're not out there teaching them who you are, what you do and how to get in touch with you?

How are you spending your day?

What's your daily routine? Do you have a daily plan? It's amazing how many sellers don't. Here's a routine with no road map. Don't you know a few people like this?

"I get to the office at 8 or 8:30...OKAY...9 in the morning. It's not my fault I'm late. The traffic is TERRIBLE. First I go to the coffee machine. I CAN'T WORK WITHOUT MY COFFEE. I run into a coworker. We discuss the game or "Desperate Housewives" or something else we saw on TV last night. After coffee I go to the restroom and then go back to the break room for another cup. I TOLD YOU...I CAN'T WORK WITHOUT MY COFFEE. A couple of more conversations with coworkers. Hey, it's time for a cigarette break. I NEED TO SMOKE WHEN I'm working. And Bill and Susan are out there. Okay, time to check the email. Lots of jokes to read and delete. And I have a bunch to send. I make a few obligatory client phone calls. Have to. The boss wants us to make a couple of calls. Then, IT'S LUNCH TIME! I might as well go home for lunch. Oh, yeah. Better stop at the cleaners and...is that new store FINALLY OPEN? Shopping here is FUN. OH, NO. WHAT TIME IS IT? What happened to the TIME? I have the attention span of a ferret on crack. I'd better hurry back to the station. Darn...I forgot to ask anybody at that store if they do any advertising. Oh, well. I'll do it later. Man, it's already TWO IN THE AFTERNOON. I'd better get back to the computer to crank out some computer-generated proposals for clients. The clients won't understand them, heck...I don't even understand them. They'll probably reject them anyway. Everybody does. But these are really for the boss. The boss has been on me lately because my billing is DOWN and suddenly she needs to see proof that I'm REALLY WORKING. OF COURSE I'M REALLY WORKING. It's not my fault the economy is down. Besides, our station SUCKS in the ratings. Ooh, a message from that furniture client. Says it's important. Better call him back. No, that would be a bad idea. He's probably mad at me because I didn't call him yesterday. If I call him now he'll PROBABLY CANCEL. Well, it's FIVE O'CLOCK anyway. Better start shutting it down for the day. Don't want to miss Happy Hour. Man, this media business sure is HARD WORK. I deserve a drink. I wonder how long they'll keep paying me for this? Thank GOD I'm still getting a salary against commissions."

Reasons for call reluctance

- Burnout. You feel over-worked and you feel you need a break.
- Personality. You just don't enjoy meeting new people.

- Fear of rejection. You hate hearing “NO.”
- Dirty Little Secret. Clients intimidate you because you are afraid you don't know what you're doing. Or, you made a promise to a client you never kept. Maybe you have a problem staying focused on the client and his business or some other issue.
- Poor Work Habits. You're getting lazy. It's time to change bad habits and get back in gear.

Ten ways to improve your attitude and overcome call reluctance

One: Avoid negative self-talk

Teach yourself to recognize that little voice inside your head that tells you that you will fail. Refuse to dwell on guilt from the past or worry about the future. You have no control over events from the past. You can't accurately predict the future. All you really have control over is "right now." Logically, anguishing about something from the past or fearing the future is a complete waste of time. You must stay focused in the present moment, which is really the essence of your life.

Two: Discipline yourself to make more calls

Get your rear end out of that chair, **away from the computer** and force yourself to make some calls. Take a look at the white business pages of your phone book and get a good idea of how many businesses there are in your market. Keep in mind that in an average month a typical radio station will have fewer than fifty direct accounts on the air. This means that most of the businesses in your area have never been called on properly, or have never been called on at all, and that means tremendous opportunities for those who bother to just make the calls.

Three: Distance yourself from negative people, office gossip and any other negative conversation

Refuse to participate. Negativity spreads like a virus. Practice The Three C's...Try not to CRITICIZE, CONDEMN OR COMPLAIN. Remember that you can change your internal "operating system." You can choose to replace your negative thought with a positive one. When you catch yourself thinking negatively, consciously bring yourself back into the present moment and focus on something positive.

Four: Change the way you think about your closing ratio

I always believed that the old adage, "Call on ten...get three appointments...close one sale" seemed bleak. So I changed my closing ratio to NINE OUT OF TEN. Here's what I mean. If I believe that I can help a client and that the client has the resources to allow me to help, I'll close that client EVENTUALLY. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, maybe not this quarter. But sooner or later, sometime this year, I'll close that sale.

Five: Stop selling spots and start educating clients

Stop selling generic spot “packages” and get back to doing custom proposals and educating clients properly. Educated clients buy more than uneducated clients. Most direct clients know very little about the overall marketing process and much less about advertising, the strengths and weaknesses of different media, the difference between a good spot and a bad spot or how to calculate return on investment from a media campaign. Think of yourself as a teacher instead of a salesperson.

Six: Expand your vision

Instead of "ganging up" on the same direct clients that everybody else in town is calling on, go out into neighborhoods you rarely frequent and call on clients who are unlikely to have been contacted by other stations and other media.

Seven: Every time you make a call, you get paid

What is YOUR average sale when you do close a deal? What is your commission on that sale? What is your true closing ratio? Divide your closing ratio into your commission from an average sale and you'll realize that every time you make a new business call, it's like putting “X” number of dollars in your pocket. How much money do you want to make today? Make the calls.

Eight: Don't give up

If you come up with a brilliant campaign for a client and he doesn't buy it, don't just shelve the idea. Pitch a similar idea to everybody else in that product category until you sell it.

Nine: Deal with Dirty Little Secrets

Sometimes, you won't make a call on a particular account because you are experiencing guilt regarding an issue with that client. Usually it's something minor. Deal with it. If the client deserves an apology then do it, make the necessary amends and move on. You'll immediately feel better.

Ten: Change your pitch and get more appointments

To get a meeting with a prospective client, use a headline to break through the clutter. “I just wanted to take a few minutes to talk about your advertising” just doesn't cut it any more. A better way would be to use an immediate attention-getting device, just like we do when we write a spot. Here are some headlines you might try.

- a. "I think I've figured out a way that you haven't thought about yet to get more qualified traffic into your store. Is there a good time this week when I could show you what I've discovered?"

- b. "I have a great idea for a commercial for you. I've sketched it out and I'd love to show it to you. When would be a good time for me to come by?"
- c. "I've learned a logical way to calculate return on investment on any advertising you do. It will make it much easier for you to track your newspaper, direct mail, any advertising you do. When would be a good time to meet so I can show it to you?"
- d. "I've been studying your business and I think I've discovered a marketing problem with your store and a way to overcome it. But perhaps I'm overlooking something important. Could I come by and show you what I've found?"
- e. "I know a way that I could improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the advertising that you're doing by eighty percent, whether you advertise with me or not. It would take me about twenty minutes to show you what I know. Would Tuesday be a good time to meet?"

Ask yourself these questions: Am I spending enough time prospecting? If not, why? Am I a member of a Business Leads Group? Do I regularly get out of the office and "go hunting" for new local direct business? Am I slacking off because I see others getting away with it?

Identify and correct attitudinal problems. If you're not making calls, then you're not making money. That's illogical.

Re-read E-LESSON #1: **PROSPECTING** for great and creative ways to get yourself back in sync by calling on prospects and clients. Who do **you** do business with and have you ever talked to them about what **you** can offer? There are a lot of people out there that are willing to talk to you about what you can do for them – But they can't learn from you if you don't call on them.

Get busy now.

There is an on-line companion video provided with this lesson.

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