

# Professionals are prepared. Period.

Little is left to chance with those at the top of the sales world. Opening statements with cold prospects are ready to go at all moments. Differentiating features and benefits are top of mind. Challenges to meeting objectives are predicted and examined. Appropriate re-sponses are prepared and practiced. If it can be identified, thought through and practiced in advance... it is.

In the following pages you'll find the salesReady checklist for those who sell. Because it's general in scope, you'll find some areas of preparation that may not apply to your sales world and others that may need to be expanded.

If it can be identified, thought through and practiced in advance... **it is.**

While some of these items in many larger organizations can be the responsibility of other departments, the professional leaves nothing to chance. Take full ownership of your prepared-ness and use what's provided, create what's not, and improve what's weak.

This is a guideline to examining how ready you are and a thought prompt to fine-tuning your messages and process. If you lead a team, use it as a guide for sales training beyond product knowledge.

It's your sales life. You're responsible for your results.

## the preparedness checklist

### REGULAR SALES COMMUNICATION

- at least two compelling opening statements of value for your prospect in each format
  - in person
  - on the phone
  - on voice mail
  - by email
  - by letter
- at least two different and specific follow-up voice mail messages
- at least five open-ended questions appropriate to your sales world (see final chart)
- at least one stock email response for any communication repeated in more than 30% of your sales efforts (can always be expanded or shortened in order to personalize the communication) – areas to consider include:
  - initiating interest
  - follow-up
  - secondary follow-up
  - price inquiry
  - literature or collateral material request
  - appointment confirmation
  - creating urgency
  - closing
    - thank you (business, referral, appointment, discussion, demonstration, etc.)
  - disqualifying
- at least two points of true differentiation from your competitors
- at least one statement that communicates a solid reason a prospect or customer should buy from you now (value/ urgency statements) (see sample section 1)
- fully prepared standard presentations (for formal & informal presentations)

# CHALLENGING COMMUNICATION

- at least one response to each of the top three objections you hear from prospects and customers
- at least one response to the “price is too high” objection (see sample section 2)
- at least one statement to move the price-sensitive prospect or customer to a discussion of value (see sample section 3)
- at least one statement to comfortably exit a sales situation no longer worth your time (see sample section 4)
- at least one response to the discount inquiry (“What can you do for me on the price?”) indicating a need for something more (or less) from the prospect or customer in order for a discount to be considered (see sample section 5)

# CLOSING COMMUNICATION

- at least two closing statements (see sample section 6)
- at least one statement asking for referrals

## TOOLS

- proposal templates for each product or service you sell
- contract/ agreement templates for each product or service you sell
- three customer references prepared in all possible requested formats

verbal  
email

letter/ fax

- knowledge and/ or list of your company’s top five customers (in the event sharing this information has no negative competitive impact)

# sample statements

## PART ONE: VALUE/URGENCY STATEMENTS

A few starter ideas for developing value/ urgency statements that should help you create more urgency throughout the sales process...

- “In terms of the return on investment, if you start this [month/ quarter/ year] you can expect to save \$XXX,XXX this month/ quarter/ year— a nice number for your [department/ team].”
- “The exciting part of this [solution/ pro-gram] is not only the additional immediate revenue you’ll likely generate, but also the added referrals that become possible as a result— in addition to the competitive barriers you’ll create by getting the pri-mary customer relationship going now.”
- “It seems like a great fit to what you’re try-ing to accomplish, and I’m fairly confident we’ll have the inventory available, but we can only guarantee it [today/ this week/ this month]. What concerns do you have about moving forward now?”
- “The delivery and payment terms are very attractive at the moment, but they can change at the end of the [week/ month/ quarter].”

## PART TWO: “YOUR PRICE IS TOO HIGH” RESPONSES

Beginning points for developing your responses to the “price is too high” objection...

- “I understand your price concern, Bob. In fact, I’m sure several others in the room have similar thoughts. Initially, the price can seem high, but in the mid and long terms, I’m pretty sure you’ll be very excited about the return on investment. Let’s take a look.”
- “That’s a valid issue, Susan. Several of our current customers had those same concerns at the beginning. Let me show you some examples of how those pur-chases paid off.”
- “Yes, it does seem a bit high initially. When you look at the complete value of it over the life of its service, I think you’ll feel much more comfortable with the investment.”

## PART THREE: GETTING BEYOND PRICE

Sample statements to help you and your team bring sales discussions back to the value discussion...

### How much is it?

- “There are so many different variables that come into play, but the price is generally between \$X,XXX and \$XX,XXX [wide range]. Once we look at your situation we’ll be able to pin down a more specific price. How have you been handling [their current process or situation] over the last several months?”
- “The price ranges between \$X,XXX and \$XX,XXX [wide range]. Once we nail down your objectives with this, we should be able to get more specific. What would you consider to be your primary chal-lenge with this [area of discussion] right now?”
- “The base price starts at \$X,XXX. Let’s figure out what’s best for you, and then we can get more specific. How do you plan on using the [product]?”
- “The investment is anywhere from \$X,XXX and \$XX,XXX [wide range]. Your return on that investment will depend on several variables. What prompted you [or your company] to look into this now?”

## PART FOUR: EXIT STATEMENTS

Some ideas on gently ending a sales effort that no longer appears to be worth your time...

- “At the moment, I’m not sure we can provide enough value to you, but I’d like to keep in touch should things change. May I keep in touch periodically?”
- “Wow, you really have your hands full at the moment. Perhaps we should talk again in a few months and let you focus on these other priorities. May I add you to our company newsletter?”
- “That sounds like an exciting project. We may be a little early in our discus-sions given all of your priori-ties. May I give you a call in two months?”

## PART FIVE: “WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR ME ON THE PRICE?” RESPONSES

A few starting points for responding to the discount inquiry from prospects and customers...

- “I have a great deal of flexibility for multiple buys but not on single purchases. Let’s take a look at your plans in the long-term and see if there’s something we can do to save you a little bit of money.”
- “I won’t be able to offer a discount now without [increasing the delivery time, decreasing the volume, removing the benefit of the X, etc.]. Is [issue] necessary right now?”
- “Our prices are firmly set based on specific cost structures that limit our discount flexibility. Is there a price you feel is more appropriate?”
- “Are you considering purchasing several?”

## PART SIX: CLOSING STATEMENTS

Any closing statement should be delivered or asked with confidence and an expectant attitude...

- Would you like to move forward?
- Are you ready to get started?
- Can we go ahead?
- We can start the process today with a credit card, if you’d like.
- We can deliver it to you by the close of business tomorrow, if you’d like.
- We can have it delivered by the end of the month, if we can get a signed contract into the implementation department by Thursday.
- Should I forward a contract so you can get started?
- Would you like to try it for a quarter?
- It’ll take a few weeks to process and ship the order, so if you’re interested in moving forward, we should start the paperwork now.
- Let’s get this off your plate and start the paperwork. What do you think?
- Let’s start the process so you can get onto your other priorities. Sound good?

# open-ended questions

Open-ended questions are one of the most valuable tools for those who sell (if followed up by listening). They help gather information, qualify sales opportunities, and establish rapport, trust and credibility. With such core importance to the sales process, the professional leaves little to chance when it comes to owning a repertoire of powerful open-ended questions... questions that are answered by more than a simple yes or no... questions where the prospect or customer gets directly involved in the sales discussion

In case you’ve not had the opportunity to put yours in writing, here are some of our favorites at [justsell.com](http://justsell.com). You’ll likely have several additional questions specific to your industry, but these’ll get you more than started.

Write down the ones you find valuable. Commit them to memory with your team.

Print them out. Practice them on your drive in or on the way to your next appointment. Tack them up near your phone. Pass them on to your sales team.

## **The key here...**

Ask the question and let the prospect or customer give you their answer.

**No leading.**

**No prompting.**

**No interrupting.**

## **INFORMATION GATHERING**

What prompted you/ your company to look into this?

What are your expectations/ requirements for this product/ service?

What process did you go through to determine your needs?

How do you see this happening?

What is it you'd like to see accomplished?

With whom have you had success in the past?

With whom have you had difficulties in the past?

Can you help me understand that a little better?

What does that mean?

How does that process work now?

What challenges does that process create?

What challenges has that created in the past?

What are the best things about that process?

What other items should we discuss?

## **QUALIFYING**

What do you see as the next action steps?

What's your timeline for implementing/ purchasing this type of service/ product?

What other data points should we know before moving forward?

What budget has been established for this?

What are your thoughts?

Who else is involved in this decision?

What could make this no longer a priority?

What's changed since we last talked?

What concerns do you have?

## **ESTABLISHING RAPPORT, TRUST & CREDIBILITY**

How did you get involved in...?

What kind of challenges are you facing?

What's the most important priority to you with this? Why?

What other issues are important to you?

What would you like to see improved?

How do you measure that?