Call Guide &
Objection Handling Techniques
Introduction

No one enjoys making cold calls — the chance of rejection is large and the chance of success is minimal. There are many reasons to avoid making cold calls, but there is one compelling reason to bite the bullet and do it: **If you don’t make cold calls, you can’t close sales.**

This objective of this call guide is to assist you in securing customer appointments and to help increase your comfort level when handling customer objections.

The following topics are included in this guide:

1. Planning the Call
2. Getting Past the Gatekeeper – Sample Scripts and Techniques
3. Securing an Appointment with the Decision Maker – Constructing Your Elevator Pitch
4. Initial Meeting – Sample Questions To Ask
5. Handling Resistance – Potential Customer Objections and Possible Responses
Planning the Call

Before you jump into making calls to prospective customers, it is important to take some time to step back, and plan out the calls you will be making.

» What’s the overall goal of the call?
   - Is it to gain some preliminary information about the company or industry you are prospecting?
   - Is it to find out the name of the key decision maker or influencer of the company you are calling – the one who can make important financial decisions?
   - Is it to talk to the decision maker directly so that you can generate enough interest to secure a face-to-face meeting?

» What questions should you ask? Although this will be based on the overall desired outcome of the call, ensure the questions relate back to the objective of the call.
   - Are you qualifying leads or confirming information that you have gathered to date about the prospect?
   - Are you setting up an appointment?
   - Are you seeking additional information to augment your prospect profile?

» Where do you plan on documenting the information you plan to collect?
   - In an Excel spreadsheet?
   - In your CRM?
   - In your Contact Management System?
     - Ensure that you have a central repository to document such items as:
       - Business owner/president’s name
       - Name of IT resource
       - Gatekeeper’s name
       - Key decision maker’s name
       - Initial call date
       - Follow-up call date(s)
       - Preliminary company information gathered from company Web site, gatekeeper, etc.
       - Date(s) of face-to-face meeting
Getting Past the Gatekeeper – Tips and Techniques

In this section, we will examine ways to increase the cold-calling success ratio through the introduction of various strategies and sample scripting that strive to make you more comfortable with the overall cold-calling process.

The first challenge of every cold calling initiative involves getting past the gatekeeper. Whether talking to voicemail or to the Administrative Assistant, the obstacle that salespeople face in the beginning of the sales process is trying to make themselves important enough to warrant phone time or face time with the Decision Maker. The following tips are provided to help make this access easier for you:

1. **Make the Gatekeeper your Ally.** Be friendly and sincere. The Gatekeeper is essential to your knowledge base and will help you gather the information you require about key personnel or the company’s initiatives.

2. **Refer to the Prospective Company as “Their”s.** When speaking to the Gatekeeper, refer to the company you are prospecting to as "her company" or "her organization" if the Gatekeeper is female. Similarly, if it is a male who holds the key, refer to the prospective customer as "his company" or "his organization" – because as far as you are concerned, it is her/his company!

3. **Don't be Deceptive.** Don't try to come across as an old friend or family member of the Decision Maker.

4. **Know a Few Key Things About the Company you are Calling.** If you are offered voicemail, always ask when you might be able to get 10 minutes of the Decision Maker’s time. This might prompt the Gatekeeper to ask why you are calling in the first place. If you have done your research on the company or industry in general and have identified some of the issues they could potentially be facing, you should be able to gain consideration with a strong value proposition. Google the company’s Web site; find out the name of the business owner and make note of this before making your call. In other words, KNOW THY CUSTOMER before making the call!

5. **Personalize the Cold Call.** If the Gatekeeper gives you some valuable information that you can use, consider sending him/her a small token of your gratitude. If you do so, the next time you call, you may get more consideration.

6. **Timing is Everything.** Decision Makers are often at their desks early (by 7:30 AM) and leave late, so keep those times in mind when placing your calls.

7. **Be a Sleuth.** If this is a repeat call to the key Decision Maker, and the Gatekeeper suggests voicemail again, ask if it would be possible to have the Decision Maker’s email address instead. If the Gatekeeper is resistant and suggests that you send the information to his/her attention, pay close attention to how the company’s email system is structured. You may be able to decipher the Decision Maker’s email address from the information the Gatekeeper has given you.

8. **Set up a Read Receipt on your email.** If you do get the Decision Maker’s email address and send the person information, set up a read receipt to verify that it has been received and opened. Place a call to the person as soon as you see that the message has been received.

9. **If you are returning a call from the Decision Maker, make sure you state it.** The Gatekeeper will hopefully give your message priority if he or she knows that the Decision Maker is expecting your call.

10. **Have a Finely Tuned Elevator Pitch.** When you do reach the Decision Maker, make sure you have a finely tuned elevator pitch. If you don't have an Elevator Pitch, get one! Write it down and practice, practice, practice. (For help on how to construct an Elevator Pitch, see Section 2: Getting an Appointment With The Decision Maker – Constructing Your Elevator Pitch.)
Sample Call Scripts for Getting Past the Gatekeeper

Below are a couple of sample call scripts that you can use to obtain the name of the Decision Maker from the Gatekeeper. Keep in mind the goal of the call at this point: **You are trying to get the name of the person in the prospective company that is responsible for making IT purchase decisions.**

**Sample #1**

Receptionist (aka: THE GATEKEEPER): ABC Company. This is Jill speaking. How can I direct your call?

Salesperson (aka: THE COLD CALLER): Good morning, Jill. This is Duncan Hynes from Hynes Technical Consulting. I am hoping that you can help me. I am looking for the person in your organization who is responsible for making decisions as it relates to your company’s computer and IT needs. That wouldn’t be John Jones would it?”

Receptionist (aka: THE GATEKEEPER): Oh no, that wouldn’t be John Jones. John Jones is our CEO. Bob Cole is the individual that is responsible for that – he is our Director of Technical Services.

Salesperson (aka: THE COLD CALLER): Great! Do you happen to have his extension number handy?

Receptionist (aka: THE GATEKEEPER): Sure … it’s extension 389…Would you like me to transfer you?

Salesperson (aka: THE COLD CALLER): Actually, that is OK. Do you happen to know when he may have about 10 minutes to speak? I don’t want to interrupt him at the moment…

The idea behind this approach is that if John Jones is the CEO/President of the company, the Receptionist will not want to bother him with a cold call from a salesperson. It is almost a relief to her to be able to give you the name and information of Bob Cole as he is someone who is below John Jones on the organizational chart at the company.

**Sample #2**

Receptionist (aka: THE GATEKEEPER): ABC Company. This is Jill speaking. How can I direct your call?

Salesperson (aka: THE COLD CALLER): Good morning, Jill. This is Duncan Hynes from Hynes Technical Consulting. Jill, I was wondering if you could help me?


Salesperson (aka: THE COLD CALLER): Great! I’m looking for the name of the person in your firm who might be in charge of your computer systems.

Receptionist (aka: THE GATEKEEPER): That would be Cindy Rella.

Salesperson (aka: THE COLD CALLER): Wonderful! Do you happen to have her extension number handy?

Receptionist (aka: THE GATEKEEPER): Sure … its extension 389. Would you like me to transfer you?

Salesperson (aka: THE COLD CALLER): Actually, that is OK. Do you happen to know when she may have about 10 minutes to speak? I don’t want to interrupt her at the moment…

Cold calling is a bit like driving somewhere in a strange town. We know the address of where we are going (123 Decision Maker Ave) but we don’t have a map so we need to ask for directions. Cold calling is really just asking for directions to the Decision Maker and devising strategies to overcome any obstacles that stand in your way! When calling into a prospective organization, remember we’re asking for directions, and everyone likes to be asked to help. You will probably need to explain what type of help you are looking for.

Once you have successfully gained the name of the Decision Maker (or your desired contact person), **do not automatically asked to be transferred to them.** This may sound like an odd comment to make. Keep in mind the GOAL of today’s cold-calling exercise: To find out who the Decision Maker is at the organization you are prospecting...
in an effort to build out your list of names. Stay in the groove and continue to make other calls into other prospective organizations and continue building out your list of names of relevant Decision Makers.

Use the remaining time on the call to build additional rapport with the Receptionist, and resist the offer to be transferred. Instead, ask the Receptionist when a good time would be to call the Decision Maker or better yet, ask if you could set up an appointment to speak with him/her. **Do not forget to thank Receptionists for their time and their assistance** – after all, they gave you some very valuable information.

In some instances, you may make a call into a prospective company and end up speaking to someone other than the Receptionist who you realize is not the Decision Maker. Do not discount this call, but use it to gather some additional information about the company you are calling into.

Salesperson (aka: THE COLD CALLER): Good morning. This is Duncan Hynes from Hynes Technical Consulting. I am looking for the person in your organization who is responsible for making decisions as it relates to your company’s computer and IT needs. Would that be you?

Company Contact who is NOT the relevant person: No. I am not the one to talk to regarding your products or services.

Salesperson (aka: THE COLD CALLER): Oh Really? What is it that you do at ABC Company?

Do not say, “Oh, who is?” Try to engage the person in conversation for a bit and use the opportunity to gather additional information about the company you are calling into. After some time has past, then ask who you should be speaking to instead. Again, note the person’s name and contact information and add to your list of Decision Makers. Continue on to your next call. Always keep in mind your objective of these initial cold calls: To collect names of relevant individuals at each company so that you can call into these people on your next round of calls some time in the near future.

Another tip is to ask for the Sales Department when the Receptionist answers. Callers into the sales department are normally not screened. Then, when you get a sales person on the phone, start the conversation with:

Salesperson (aka: THE COLD CALLER): Hi. I am not sure if you can help me, but I am actually hoping to speak to your Sales Manager. Who would that be?

Salespeople are not trained to screen calls, and they normally love to talk, so chances are you will get most of the information about the company you need, as well as the name of the person you ultimately need to speak to. The same tactic can be used to ask for the accounting department when the Receptionist answers. You probably won’t be screened by the Receptionist from those departments and people in those departments are not trained to screen calls, so there is a high probability that they will give you the information you need.

Once you have compiled your list of names of relevant Decision Makers, it is time to change the cold-calling focus from "Getting Past the Gatekeeper" to "Calling on the Decision Maker". Once you have the name of the relevant Decision Maker, it will make it easier to get past the Gatekeeper the next time around, as Receptionists do not normally screen calls as much when you have the name of the person you want to speak to.

This change in focus will now require a change in cold-calling tactics which will now require a different set of cold-calling scripts.
Getting an Appointment – Constructing the Elevator Pitch

Focus on Your Prospect! When presented with an opportunity to engage with a prospective customer, a natural tendency is to focus on YOUR company, and the product, service or solution that you are interested in selling. As important as this information is to convey, you might have better success if you focus on their world rather than focusing on what your company is selling.

Your Solution is Not the Only Solution, But it is the Best Solution for Them. When beginning to engage in a conversation with the Decision Maker, look to discuss issues that you believe this prospective customer may be experiencing – but, try not to be too overbearing in assuming that they in fact are experiencing these issue. If they are having any of the issues that you have brought up, they will be open in exploring them further with you. So for this type of cold call to be successful, you must have invested the time to research the company or vertical you are targeting and have educated yourself on the various pain points and concerns that this company or industry may be experiencing. If you focus your conversation on trying to get your prospect to believe that you understand their problem, they in return will believe that you have a solution to it.

So, once you have gained the contact information of the key individual that you need to speak to at the prospective company, your new call objective becomes winning a follow-up call or meeting where you can discuss your solution in more detail.

The following section provides scripting around how to obtain a follow-up meeting through the use of an effective "Elevator Pitch".

What is an Elevator Pitch?

- A concise, carefully planned, and well-practised description about your company that your mother should be able to understand in the time it would take to ride up an elevator
- Designed to generate quick interest and to secure a longer, more in-depth appointment some time in the future; it will be during that next meeting where you will begin to probe for customer needs in an attempt to position your solution against those needs
- It should take less than 30 seconds to deliver

What an Elevator Pitch is not:

- It is not a "sales pitch"
- Don't get caught up in using the entire pitch to tell the customer how great your solution is

Creating the Elevator Pitch

There are four questions your Elevator Pitch must answer:

1. **What is your solution?** Briefly describe your solution (what you are selling). Do not go into excruciating detail. Also ensure that you speak about at least one of the main benefits of your solution and how it will assist their organization.

2. **Who is your market?** Briefly discuss who you are selling your solution to. Are you targeting a specific vertical or industry? How large of a market do they represent?

3. **Who is behind the company?** Tell them a little about you and your team's background and achievements. If you have many years of experience in the field, experienced and competent technicians/engineers or have received any awards recently, let your prospect be aware of these strengths to create credibility.
4. **What is your competitive advantage?** Simply being in an industry is not enough. You need to effectively communicate how your company is different and why you have an advantage over the competition. Length of time in market? Strong customer base? Proprietary technology? New way of doing business?

What your Elevator Pitch must contain:

1. **A "hook"**. Open your pitch by getting the customer's attention with a "hook." A statement or question that piques their interest to want to hear more.

2. **About 150-225 words.** Your pitch should not be any longer than 30 seconds in length.

3. **Passion.** Customers expect energy and dedication from entrepreneurs.

4. **Call to Action – A Request.** At the end of your pitch, you must ask for something. Do you want their business card, to schedule a full presentation, to ask for a referral?

**Sample Elevator Pitches**

**Example #1**

Good morning/afternoon
Thank you for accepting my call today. I appreciate that you are busy, and I promise not to take up too much of your time.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and my company - **<<Enter Company Name>>**.

**<<Enter Company Name>>** has been in business for over 25 years and we work with small and medium-sized businesses in the Greater Metropolitan Area that are facing escalating IT costs and are looking at the possibilities of outsourcing. Recently, we have been awarded the city’s 2005 Consumer Choice award for "Most Outstanding Technical Service Support Provider" as a result of our exceptional customer service!

Did you know that one hour of computer downtime can cost a $4-million/year small business upwards of $1500? **<<Enter Company Name>>** is revolutionizing the way computer networks of small and medium-sized businesses are supported by modern-day IT Service Providers through the introduction of our **<<Enter Responsive Program>>**. Our **<<Enter Responsive Program>>** is designed to help small and medium-sized businesses reduce the amount of downtime they currently experience, thus resulting in increased employee productivity and substantial cost savings.

If you have ever been frustrated with your email going offline or have experienced slowness in your computer processing, our **<<Enter Responsive Program>>** can help resolve those issues, and actually work to prevent them from reoccurring in the future. Can your present IT Service Provider make these claims?

I would like to set some time aside where we can sit down and discuss our new **<<Enter Responsive Program>>** with you. Are you available to meet tomorrow morning at 11 AM for about 30-45 minutes or so?

**Sample #2: A shorter, more conversational style Elevator Pitch.....**

Good morning/afternoon,

Thank you for accepting my call today. I appreciate that you are busy, and I promise not to take up too much of your time.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and my company - **<<Enter Company Name>>**.
<<Enter Company Name>> has been in business for over 25 years and we work with small- and medium-sized businesses in the Greater Metropolitan Area that are facing escalating IT costs and are looking at the possibilities of outsourcing the IT function.

Through our <<Enter Responsive Program>>, we help small and medium-sized businesses to analyze the risks and potential benefits of outsourcing and help them to reduce the amount of network downtime that they might be experiencing. And, if employee productivity and escalating IT management costs are a concern, we have the capabilities of providing IT services if the situation points to that as a possible alternative.

I would like to set some time aside where we can sit down and discuss our new <<Enter Responsive Program>> with you. Are you available to meet tomorrow morning at 11 AM for about 30-45 minutes or so?

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Breaking the Pitch Down…

… We work with companies that are facing escalating IT management costs and are looking at the possibilities of outsourcing …

» This speaks to relevance and positioning.

» You describe who you are by the type of organization that you serve and a significant issue that it might be experiencing.

» The customer can automatically identify with the issue – "Wow, that sounds like me."

… We help them analyze the risks and potential benefits of outsourcing …

» You are now introducing more specific relevance via the concern they would typically be struggling with.

… and we have the capabilities to provide the IT management services if their situation warrants …

» Here you are stating the relevance and value you can provide by outlining some of the specific features that your solution contains that can help solve the issue the prospect may be experiencing.

The most successful salespeople take the time to compose their elevator pitch and practice it over and over again until it becomes almost natural. It is worth your time to focus on making your elevator pitch as effective as it can be, because you only have one chance to make a first good impression and the delivery of your elevator pitch is that first opportunity. Don’t use the actual call with your first few prospects to “wing” or devise your elevator pitch. Prepare and practice ahead of time.
Once you are successful at obtaining a follow-up meeting with the Decision Maker, the tactics change again. The following section outlines the types of probing questions to ask in an effort to delve deeper into the prospect’s business and identify issues that are affecting his/her business.
The Face to Face Meeting – Getting the Right Information

Your Elevator Pitch worked and you were successful in landing a follow-up appointment – now what?!?

In this section, we will review the types of questions to ask to extract the prospect’s needs and pain points in an effort to position your solution. During the prospect meeting, there are certain questions that you will want to raise in an effort to find out exactly what makes the prospect “tick”. These questions will hopefully provide discussion around:

» What their current network operating environment looks like.

» What their experiences have been around any recent or historical network/computer downtime.

» What their experiences have been around the length of these downtime incidences and the length of time it typically takes on average to fix any computer/network problem.

» What the employee and/or business impact has been as a result of network downtime.

» What their current IT services arrangement looks like. Do they have someone that they call when an issue arises? What has this experience been like in the past? Are they satisfied with this service provider and the work performed? What do they like about the service provider? What would they like to see improved?

» What their most important business services are (Examples: e-mail, printing, Web site, CRM, vertical-specific software application …)

Here’s a sample script for a face-to-face meeting with the Decision Maker:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I know you are busy so I won’t take up too much of your time. I will strive to keep this meeting to approximately 30 minutes or so.

Through implementation of one of our various managed IT services packages, our company is able to help small and medium-sized businesses like yours reduce their IT service costs and improve their overall IT network performance, thus resulting in increased employee and organizational productivity.

At this time, I don’t know whether you require our services or not, but with your permission I’d like to ask you a few questions and see if there is anything that we can do that can help your organization either: 1) Generate additional revenue, 2) Reduce your IT support costs, 3) Reduce your network security risks, or 4) Increase overall organizational productivity.

I want you to know that regardless of whether or not you become one of my valued clients, everything we talk about today will be held in the strictest confidence.

[Start the conversation off by trying to draw out recent incidents where the prospect experienced network downtime. This line of questioning will help to determine organizational pain points, as well as help paint a picture as to the impact that the network downtime had on the business overall. This line of questioning should help open up the conversation so that opportunities are presented that will allow you to begin positioning your solution, focusing on the benefits that your solution provides.]

Start asking questions around:

» If they could magically eliminate three of their biggest IT-related headaches what would they be?

» What have their experiences been around any recent or historical network/computer downtime?

» What have their experiences been around the length of these downtime incidences. How long does it typically take to fix their average computer/network problem?

» What was the employee and/or business impact as a result of the network downtime that was experienced?
So, from my own understanding, what you are saying is (paraphrase the answers to the previous questions). Is that accurate? Would it be safe to say that if there was a way for you to solve (insert biggest problem identified by previous questions), it would be worth exploring in more detail? (Hopefully yes!)

Great! We have a variety of different solutions that we can offer, but before I start describing each of them, I would like to talk to you for a moment about your company in general and the type of work that your employees perform. I want to make sure that the solution I propose is the one that will benefit your organization the most.

[Then lead the conversation into what the prospect actually does as a business]:

Ask questions around:

» What does a typical day look like for each of your employees? They come in at 8:30 AM … then what do they do?

[The aim of this line of questioning is to help determine the prospect’s Critical Business Services. We are trying to draw a line between what each employee does as part of their general role and responsibilities and then mapping it back to the various aspects of the organization’s network that support these activities. With this line of questioning, we are trying to educate the prospect on the importance of their network infrastructure to their general business success, and the reliance that their employees have on their network to do their job.]

Other questions to ask that will help drive home the importance of their network to their business:

» What are some of the key applications that you use?
» What do these applications allow you to do?
» What would you do if you didn’t have access to these applications?"

[Then lead the conversation around how their network is currently supported. Some questions to ask include:]

» What do you like about your current IT service provider?
» What’s working well?
» What would you like to improve or change?
» What solutions would we have to offer that would motivate you enough to explore working with us?

[The aim with this line of questioning is to try to compare and contrast the prospect’s current IT service arrangement against your proposed solution. You want to highlight the differences between the REACTIVE network support they are receiving from their current service provider, and your more intuitive, PROACTIVE approach as a result of your increased visibility into the prospect’s network that their current service provider probably doesn’t have. Here you are educating your prospect that you have a better way of supporting their network infrastructure than always reacting to issues once they arise. With your solution, you are actually working to prevent some issues they have experienced in the past.]

Then summarize all of the information that the prospect has provided and begin speaking about your solution.

If you encounter any objections from your prospect, refer to the section below: Handling Resistance – Objection Handling Techniques.

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**Handling Resistance – Objection Handling Techniques**

The sales process is designed to move your prospects to a decision with a minimum amount of resistance. Thoroughly defining needs and using the appropriate benefit statements will reduce the amount of resistance you
encounter from customers and prospects. However, resistance to your solution might arise from a reluctance to change, from miscommunication or lack of information, or from a desire to be absolutely sure about a buying decision. For this reason, the skill of effectively handling resistance at any point of the sales process is crucial to success.

Don’t take any of the resistance you are experiencing personally. Despite the words used, the resistance is not designed to discredit you or your solution.

**Process for Handling Resistance**

The behaviors for successful handling resistance include:

1. **Acknowledging the prospect’s concern or objection.**
   a. Using an acknowledgment statement as simple as, “I can appreciate how you feel” or “I can understand your desire to be absolutely sure”, can be very effective.

2. **Asking clarifying questions (if necessary) to obtain a complete understanding of the objection.**
   a. The use of clarifying questions can help to confirm your understanding of the prospect’s resistance and help you to gather more useful information.
   b. Examples:
      i. “How has your present service provider earned the satisfaction you feel?”
      ii. “To be sure that I understand your feelings on this, what was the nature of your experience?”

3. **Describing a related experience using one of your existing customers.**
   a. For this technique, use the "Feel-Felt-Found" formula to neutralize the resistance.
   b. To "neutralize" resistance means to say or do something that compensates, counterbalances or simply acknowledges the resistance.
   c. You do this by acknowledging how the prospect might be FEELING, for example, making a statement that demonstrates you understand their point of view.
   d. You also do this by showing how your customers have FELT when they experienced the same viewpoint or found solutions.
   e. You could also describe a related third-party experience that illustrates a solution that was FOUND by another customer.
   f. Example of FEEL-FELT-FOUND Formula:
      i. “I can appreciate your concern about the price of our managed services solution. One of my other customers initially felt the same way. Now, after participating in our program over the past six months, his business is actually saving money because his network is much more stable and reliable, and he has found that our program has significantly helped to reduce the amount of expensive, emergency support calls he experiences.”
      ii. “Now that you have heard about this quick ‘return on investment’, would you allow me to review the benefits you might be able to realize if you become part of our program?”

4. **Outweighing the concern or objection with your solution’s benefits.**
   a. You outweigh with benefits by acknowledging the “negative” that the prospect has pointed out, but then listing all of the counter-balancing positives.
Continuing with our Price Objection:

i. “It seems like the price of our program is a concern for you… If you don’t mind, let’s compare what you would be paying for our solution against the associated costs of network downtime…

ii. “What you would be paying is $XX per month, or $XX per day. And with this solution, you will be gaining the following benefits:

1. “Reduced downtime as a result of proactive monitoring – our 24x7x365 monitoring solution works to dramatically shorten the time from computer failure to overall issue resolution due to the visibility we would now have into the health and status of your network.

2. “This reduced downtime results in increased employee productivity and a reduction in the overall business impact a failed network can have on an organization, and allows your employees to return to their revenue-generating activities much more quickly than before.

3. “This increased network visibility also provides substantial cost savings in terms of your overall service invoice as much of the root cause analysis and diagnostic time that would have been involved under your old arrangement is effectively eliminated.

iii. “Does this monthly fee still seem too high?”

5. Drawing a parallel to the current situation using an analogy.

a. Here you use an analogy to draw a parallel to the situation through the example of another customer’s experience.

b. “Remember last year when you were experiencing some significant IT issues and you had to keep calling us to come out on-site to fix them? During that time you mentioned that you were finding it hard to budget for IT support, so we proposed our block-service pre-payment plan where you could prepay for the network support upfront instead of us invoicing you each and every time we were called to resolve or service your network. At first you were resistant to this service plan as it involved a significant outflow of cash upfront. But you did go ahead and sign up for it because you were looking for a better way to handle your IT support expenditures and you were looking for a solution that provided some sort of cost-predictability for your organization. But I would like to think now that you have gone through this experience with us that you have found that being ‘proactive’ in your IT spending has helped you get off of the roller-coaster ride as to whether you were going to have IT expenditures this month or not.”

c. “Our new managed services program takes the support of your network to the next level and works to provide you even great control over how your IT budget is spent and works to optimize the spending of those IT dollars even more than before.”

d. “Do you see the similarities?”

6. Adding proof of performance or providing proof around the solution’s benefits by using facts or customer case studies and testimonials.

a. “I can understand your desire to be sure that this is the right decision for your organization.”

b. “Nearly 50% of our existing customer base is participating in our new managed services now and we are proud to have achieved a 90% customer satisfaction rate with this initiative.”

c. “Do you have any questions about their decision process, or would you like to speak with one of them directly to see how they like working with us?”
7. **Neutralizing resistance by giving reasons to act now.**
   a. When you give reasons to act now, you suggest the disadvantages of delay and describe the advantages of action.
   b. “You mentioned that you are about to start planning your organization’s budget for next year and that you wanted to get it set by the end of the month. By acting now, you will be able to include a budgetary element as it relates to your IT spending in this year’s budget. This will help to ensure that the IT element of your business’ spending is taken care of. Does this make sense to include IT Network Support as an expense item?”

8. **Get back on track and continue the sales process by asking a question or suggesting action steps.**

**Overcoming Common Prospect Objections**

Outlined below is a listing of common objections that you might encounter when attempting to sell your managed services solution. Effectively handling resistance and objections requires excellent questioning skills to get to the root of the objection – don’t be afraid to ask several questions to understand the underlying concern of the customer. You can then confirm the concern and address it properly.

**Objection #1: Customers that prefer status-quo**

“*My network is running fine.*”  
“My network never breaks and if it does, you (or our own service provider) come out and fix it, so why should I pay you to monitor it?”  
“We don’t need proactive monitoring.”

**Issue:**

» These customers do not understand nor see the value of proactive monitoring and currently do not fully understand the value their network plays in the success of their business.  
» These customers do not perceive the cost of downtime as being anything more than the invoice they receive from you (or their current service provider) once the issue has been resolved, and fail to recognize the true cost of downtime and how it affects the profitability and productivity of their organization.  
» Just because everything has been fine in the past does not predict the future. When they have a problem, you go onsite and fix it. You need to stress that it is virtually impossible for you to be proactive and help to prevent their network issues, unless they participate in your managed services program. Try to get them to realize that you are offering an extra insurance policy. They have probably invested in a security monitoring service (alarm) for their physical premises at their office or home so it only makes sense that they have a monitoring service for their mission-critical systems and data. Their computer data is probably the most expensive item they own in their office and virtually irreplaceable.
How to Handle this Objection:

» Help paint the picture of the true cost of downtime – if it is a professional services firm that you are dealing with, extract the hourly bill rate and the number of employees that rely on the network to perform their job and use this information to help calculate what one hour of downtime is costing the organization in terms of lost billable revenue.

Objection: “My network is running fine.”

» Partner Response: “That is great that you have not had any major problems to date but unfortunately the nature of computer networks is that they will undoubtedly go down at some point. We provide proactive monitoring and a guaranteed priority response service to networks that are smaller and less complex than yours and all of those customers have seen the benefits of our proactive approach. If you factor in the cost of downtime and potentially lost data, we can actually save you money. We may be able to set you up on a one-month trial so you can better understand this new service model and we can run a report at month’s end so we can sit down and explain the benefits to you.”

Objection: “My network never breaks and if it does, you (or our current service provider) come out onsite to fix it, so why should I pay you to monitor it?”

» Partner Response: “We are happy to respond to your call and come on site when you have a problem but we are confident that we can offer you a higher level of service at the same or less cost. For example, let’s say you get to work on a Monday morning and you are having email problems. You try to figure it out yourself for a certain period of time, then you call us. We try to get a technician over to you right away, but if we have had a large number of calls that day, all technicians are probably be dispatched, so we might not get to your location until the afternoon. When we finally get onsite, we typically then have to spend time diagnosing the issue before we can begin remediation. How does this impact your business? Well, you experienced almost an entire day of lost productivity and a bill for our services in the $200-$300 range. For the same amount of money, we could get you into our managed services program where we could have been notified about this problem before it occurred and fixed it remotely or showed up early Monday morning and spent 15 minutes to fix the problem before you and all your staff arrived for work.”

Objection #2: Customers that prefer a Break/Fix or Time and Material Basis

“I like the pay as you go approach.”

“Why should I pay for you until I need you?”

“We just want you to respond when something breaks.”

“I want/like to see a body on site.”

Issue:

» Again, these customers don’t understand the benefits of a managed services solution. You should be able to sit down with them and show them how it would be less expensive (when downtime is factored in) to participate in your monthly program.

» Or alternatively, if what you are proposing is more expensive, you need to illustrate the additional benefits that you are providing. These are the benefits that they don’t get with Break/fix:
  o Lower IT Costs
  o Reduce costly downtime
  o 24 x 7 x 365 Monitoring
  o Pinpoint and predict problems before they impact the network
- Priority response over non-contractual customers
- Lower hourly rate for on-site work
- Improved network stability
- Quarterly status reports
- Faster diagnosis of issues
- Reduced time to resolution
- Peace of mind

**Objection: “Why should I pay for you until I need you?”**

» **Partner Response:** “Do you routinely take your car in for service like oil changes, tire rotation, brake inspection, etc? Yes of course, everyone does. Well, we offer the same type of service for your network. Most of our customers agree that their network and the network applications are mission critical. If the network goes down, their business grinds to a halt. Given that your network is mission critical, not unlike the engine in a car, it pays to be responsive and to take care of it.”

**Objection: “We just want you to respond when something breaks”**

» **Partner Response:** “Great, and we can continue to service you in the same manner. But I would like to spend a few minutes meeting with you to show you how our other customers have benefited from migrating from break/fix to our managed service program. And they have actually saved money. Better service for less money – is that something you are interested in? We don’t mind responding when something breaks but we would much rather fix it before it breaks so that it doesn’t directly impact your business operations.”

**Objection #3: Customer Already Has Another Service Provider**

“We already have another provider.”

“We are happy with our current IT services provider.”

“We are already under a service contract with another provider and we are tied up for several more months.”

**Issue:**

Chances are the other provider does not offer as high a level of service or response as you do. You need to differentiate your services by gaining an understanding as to how they are being serviced today – break/fix, T&M, block. Then educate them on how your program is different and provides superior value and service. Determine if they are interested in:

1. Greater uptime
2. Less downtime
3. Fewer emergency calls
4. Quicker response time
5. Faster time to resolve a problem
6. Quarterly reports on the health of their network
7. Greater peace of mind
8. Discounted service rates
9. Higher service, less cost
Objection: “We are happy with our current IT services provider.”

  » Partner Response A: “Many of our happiest customers said the same thing prior to becoming our customers. What changed their minds was the amount of money they could save, and the amount of downtime they could avoid by modifying the way in which their network was cared for.”

  » Partner Response B: “Could you tell me what it is about your current service provider’s solution that you are pleased with? What type of work have they done for you in the past? We would appreciate the opportunity to compare our solution with theirs, and demonstrate how our solution better aligns to your overall strategic business goals and objectives.”

Objection: “We are already under a service contract with another provider and we are tied up for several more months.”

  » Partner Response: Look at these prospects as an opportunity. These customers already see value in signing a contract with a service provider.

“...”

Objection #4: Large, upfront investment already made in building the network and don’t want to spend more

“I already spent a lot of money building my network. I don’t need to spend more.”

Issue:

The customer needs to understand that even though they have spent quite a bit of money building their network, care needs to be taken to PROTECT the investment that they have just made. They obviously understand that their network is important to the functioning of their business (or they wouldn’t have gone ahead with upgrade/retuning), but it is just as important to ensure that maintenance is being done on a regular basis to ensure that it is as stable and reliable as the day it was initially installed.

Objection: “I already spent a lot of money building my network. I don’t need to spend more.”

  » Partner Response A: “Clearly you recognized the value your network plays in the success of your business by making such a large investment in it. Many of our customers see our relationship with them as protecting the effort and investment they have just made. Even if you have purchased such items as a new car, just because it is new doesn’t mean that you are going to forego the recommended routine maintenance as outlined in the owner’s manual. As with a new car purchase, you want your network to continue to function as reliably and as stable as the day the hardware and software were first installed. And our managed services solution will ensure this is the case.”

  » Partner Response B: “Network monitoring and our guaranteed response rate will ensure that not only are your employees and other resources operating at efficient levels, but that your vital corporate data is protected from security threats.”
Objection #5: Prefer hiring Internal IT

“I would rather hire an in-house person for more money who would then be available when I need him.”

“We are currently contemplating hiring a part-time IT person to work a few days each week/month.”

Contemplating Hiring a Part-time / Full-time Resource

Issue:

Ask probing questions as to why they are considering hiring someone internally. Try to determine how much they are thinking of paying them. They will likely say that they need a higher level of service or faster response than they are currently receiving. Have they thought about what their job description, role and responsibilities will be?

Unless they are a larger company that can justify the cost of a full-time employee, you should be able to go in and show them how your service can provide equal or better service at LESS COST.

Depending on your local marketplace, an IT person can cost between $25,000 and $50,000 per year, plus benefits, vacation, continuing education investment, etc.

Then, what happens if that IT person leaves to go to another company? The nature of the industry is that IT people move from project to project, company to company, all in a bid to gain as much experience as possible.

This creates a cycle of increased turnover, with resources having to be spent on having to continually search, find, interview and train a new personnel.

Also, as a business owner, how are they going to interview a technical employee if they are not technical themselves? Whereas, when dealing with an MSP, the customer can draw from a significant team of technicians, with many years of collective industry experience to draw from.

Objection: “I would rather hire an in-house person for more money who would then be available when I need him.”

Objection: “We are currently contemplating hiring a part-time IT person to work a few days each week/month.”

» Partner Response A: “We have a broad range of field experience across our entire technical staff. We have best-of-breed tools that would be very expensive for you to acquire yourself and we have highly trained and certified engineers, best practices and processes for effectively delivering service at a lower price than what an internal resource would cost to an organization.”

» Partner Response B: “What would happen if there were times when there was too much work for one person to handle? What if there were a major problem on a day when that person wasn’t in the office or available? I would assume that this person will require vacations and personal time and might not always be available in the evenings, weekends and holidays when computer problems seem to arise. How do you plan on dealing with these types of situations? Also, is there additional budget to allow for this type of expense? If you were considering hiring a part-time resource, what happens if there are times when there is not enough work for that person to do?”

» Response C: “What if that full- or part-time person quits? How hard would it be to recover? Who would you turn to during that time without a support resource? With our response-based managed services solution, our ability to service your network efficiently would not reside in one person’s head – our policies, procedures and knowledge about your network are transferable to anyone in our organization, so there will not be an interruption in your quality of service.”
Objection #6: Price

“Too expensive.”
“We don’t have the budget.”
“You cost more than the other company I have talked to.”
“I only paid you $xx in the last six months.”

Issue:

» Price is a common objection for services and it can take many different forms.
» The most important thing to do when encountering price objections is to ask questions.

Objection: “Too expensive”

» Partner Response A: “I can appreciate that you have some budgetary concerns. Can I ask what aspect of the solution seems too expensive? What are you comparing this solution too?”

» Partner Response B: “I can appreciate this concern. Many of our customers have the same budgetary constraints as you do and they find that the network-related downtime that our solution can help prevent, more than pays for their monthly fee. In the case of many of our customers, the associated savings have been the biggest benefit to them. The amount of money they have saved in having a more stable network and fewer emergency service incidences, more than offsets the cost of their monthly services contract.” (Reference another customer of yours that had this experience if you can.)

Objection: “We don’t have the budget.”

» Partner Response: “Perfectly understandable as this is a brand new service model that I am describing to you today, so it doesn’t surprise me that you don’t have allocated budget for this type of solution. Most of our new customers don’t have budget immediately either. If you were able to budget for this, do you see enough value in our service to sign on?”

» If the answer is YES, then ask: “When do you foresee having the budget?” Or “When does your new fiscal budgeting and planning exercise begin?” Or “How much do you currently budget for IT?”

» Possible Solution: Is it possible to charge a lower monthly fee for the first couple months until they get their full budget?

» If the answer is no, then they don’t see the value and you need to dig in and do more selling.

» Partner Response C: “Well, in reviewing the money you did spend last year on IT support services, we can definitely help you to spend the money that you are currently spending more wisely with our new managed services program.

Objection: “I only paid you $xx in the last six months.”

» Partner Response: “Agreed. In preparation for this meeting, I have pulled your last 12 months’ worth of invoices and have determined that you have paid us about $300 per month in reactive service over the course of the year. In some months, your bill was as high as $1,200 and in other months we didn’t visit your location at all. At the conclusion of those visits, I recall you mentioning how frustrating it was that you could never predict when you were going to have IT expenditures and how it wreaked havoc on your cash flow when you did have to call us in to look at an issue. Would you be interested in a solution that could help even out your IT spending? Better yet, wouldn’t it be nice to be part of a program that would work to PREVENT IT-related incidents that would alleviate us having to urgently respond in an emergency-type way? BUT if you take into account the lost productivity and cost of downtime, the bill that we provide is actually a small portion of the
overall real cost. I am confident that we can get you into a program that actually saves you money and results by reducing downtime and increasing uptime.”

Objection #7: Control/Security Issue

“We are concerned about the security of the proposed solution with respect to our critical data.”

“Nervous about remote access and monitoring (security, intellectual property).”

“I want to be in control of my network.”

“Customers fearing others being ‘in control’ of their network.”

Issue:

There really is no reason that a customer should have security concerns with respect to N-able’s N-central® remote monitoring and management technology. This might involve a technical discussion so you should get one of your technicians to explain the fact that N-central:

1. Does not require holes in the customer’s firewall. Uses port 443 or port 80 which are commonly open on the network.
2. Uses fully encrypted, secure Web data transmission based on known protocols.
3. Uses client-side initiated communication. The agents and probes gather information within the firewall, then push it outbound only.
4. Does not transmit critical, private information e.g. no customer data, no financial data, etc. The only data it sends out is metrics on how devices and applications are performing.

Objection #8: Risk

Trust/confidence that we will deliver.

Commitment to a partnership.

Getting companies to budget for IT.

Issue:

Risk objections require you to provide the customer assurance that you will do what you are saying you will do. You should emphasize to the customer that this is a significant partnership for both companies and ask the customer what would make them feel more comfortable that your two companies are suitable partners. It will require the following:

1. Documented case studies where you provide similar service to similar-sized companies.
2. Customer references. Your prospect might need to speak and/or meet with a couple of your existing customers. You must develop and nurture key customers as references. It is vital to the growth of your business.
3. Trial period. It might be a paid trial or no-charge so they can try before they buy. You have to weigh the pros and cons of this approach on a case-by-case basis.
4. Termination clause. If you are looking for a one-year commitment, perhaps offer an "out" clause for a limited amount of time so the customer could make the leap of faith more easily.

Objection #9: Customers that think they are too small

“We’re small and don’t have a need for managed services.”
“For those whose uptime isn’t mission critical, why do they need their systems monitored.”

Issue:
The vast majority of end-users that our Partners support are in the five-to-60-employee category. Therefore, as long as the customer has a network, they are a good candidate for your service. You might need to have a discussion that although small, their network is in fact mission critical. If they don’t believe their network is mission critical, ask them to unplug it for an hour. And it doesn’t take catastrophic failure for your service to make sense to them. Any time the network is operating less than optimally, there can be significant lost productivity costs. Small networks can be just as complex as large networks and they can both have the same types of devices and applications. Even the smallest networks can be hit by a virus, require patches, updates, etc.

Objection #10: “Not interested – this doesn’t sound any different than what any other service provider does.”

“Not interested – this doesn’t sound any different than what any other service provider does.”

Issue:
This is just a lack of education on the customer’s part that there truly is a better way of supporting their network. Most customers feel that all service providers are the same and that the only reason to call upon a service provider is when some aspect of their network breaks. It will be important to differentiate between this reactive approach where a service provider has no visibility into the network and is constantly starting at Step 1 of issue diagnosis, to your approach that includes proactive monitoring. With the proactive monitoring solution, the time spent on root cause analysis is effectively eliminated. As a result, work can begin almost immediately on repairing the problem. Also, your solution provides peace of mind because under your solution, the customer will no longer be calling into your organization when something breaks, but that you will actually be calling THEM because you are already aware of the issue and that you are currently working on fixing the problem as you speak.

Partner Response: “Our organization would very much like the opportunity to show you how our managed services program differs from most others out there in the marketplace. We focus on optimizing the performance of our customers’ networks at a price that appeals to small business owners. The emphasis is on minimizing network downtime and emergencies, while making IT spending more predictable and reasonable.”

Objection #11: I don’t have time to meet with anyone or attend an event. I am too busy.”

Partner Response: “We often are able to save our customers hundreds of dollars per month in networking operating costs and avoided downtime. I would only require about 30 minutes of your time. Would you agree that a significant productivity gain would be worth 30 minutes of your time?”

Objection #12: I don’t have time to speak at the moment. Just send me some information.”

Partner Response: “I would be happy to send you some information about our solution. Can I follow up with you in a week or so to review the information in more detail and outline how I can make the information more applicable to your business?”
About N-able Technologies®

N-able Technologies is the preferred global supplier of remote monitoring and management technology and business transformation services for managed service providers. N-able’s proven platforms offer the right combination of technology, people and processes, which help IT service providers to deliver highly profitable managed services to small- and medium-sized businesses. [www.n-able.com](http://www.n-able.com)

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