

## BEP 47 – Cold Calling: Clarifying Benefits and Making a Pitch

Today is the second in a three-part series on cold calling.

As we discussed last time, you can always make yourself more persuasive by asking well-considered questions and really listening to the answers. This principle is true whether you are selling a product or an idea.

**Peter:** So Clayton, last time we covered four steps to a good cold call. Can you refresh our memory?

**Clayton:** Sure Peter, let's review them one by one.

- 1) Respect the prospect's time. Keep your introduction very brief. Use language such as "I understand you are busy. This will just take a sec." (remember a prospect is the term we use for the person you're calling)
- 2) Establish relevance. For example, if you are a travel agent, you can ask "Do your employees travel?"
- 3) Concisely state the specific benefit *to the customer* that your plan, product or service will bring. Use language like "enables you to," "allows you to," "helps you to."
- 4) Prepare questions to help you analyze your prospect's need. Ask open questions beginning with what, where, when, who and how.

**Peter:** And why is asking open questions important?

**Clayton:** Well, because people love talking about themselves, and if you ask them open questions they'll often tell you everything you want to know. Then, you can use the prospect's own words to establish a clear need for what you are selling, and this will make your offer—or pitch—much more persuasive.

So in today's episode, we'll study how to improve your pitch by clarifying and summarizing what the prospect says.

**Peter:** All right, where do we begin?

**Clayton:** Well, where we left off last time, Steve has just gotten to step four. He's asking Linda a needs analysis question. Let's continue listening to their conversation. And as you listen, try to answer the following **questions**. The answers will be posted in a few days on our website, [www.businessenglishpod.com](http://www.businessenglishpod.com):

1. What's the main issue or problem that Linda sees with her current system?
2. What does Steve mean by a "one-stop" service?
3. What does Linda suggest instead of meeting with Steve?

## Vocabulary

**pitch:** verb or noun. This is the act of making the offer to a potential customer. It can be used as a verb, for example, "I pitched Linda Darling on our new product." It can also be used as a noun. We can say someone has "a smooth pitch." That means their pitch—the method, words and voice they use to sell their product—is very polished, professional and effective.

**the works:** This means "everything," or "the whole package." It's often used when ordering food—especially a pizza or a sandwich. If you ask for a pizza with "the works," you'll get a pizza with everything—all the available toppings. "The works" can be used idiomatically, as it is in the dialogue from this episode, to say something is comprehensive.

**multiple-site call:** adj. This is conferencing industry jargon for a video or audio conference (or a hybrid conferencing involving both video *and* audio) between more than two places. So if you are involved in a conference between New York, Manila and Oslo, that is a multiple-site call. Each city is a "site." If you just call New York from Oslo, that is what's called a "point-to-point."

**bridge:** verb or noun. To bridge a multiple-site call (see above) means to use special computer equipment (called a "bridge") to enable people at several different locations participant in an audio or video conference. For a point-to-point call (see above), a bridge is usually not necessary.

## Dialog:

**Steve:** If you could create the ideal conferencing solution, what about your service would you like to improve or change?

**Linda:** That's a good question. I guess it's a little bit unwieldy. I wish we could simplify everything...

**Steve:** What exactly do you mean by that Ms. Darling, if you don't mind me asking?

**Linda:** Linda's fine. Well, we use one company for multiple site audio calls. And another company for video conferencing. And everyone's gotta be connected to the internet to share documents, not to mention the meeting rooms all have to be booked on our internal system.

**Steve:** Thanks Linda. I think I'm getting the picture now. From my understanding, what you're truly saying is that there is no centralized system and everything is just a little too complex. Is that about right?

**Linda:** Yeah, that and it doesn't always work right. It seems like half the time we're trying to sort out technical problems.

**Steve:** What if told you there was a one-stop service that could handle everything—audio, video, online collaboration, meeting rooms, the works—with a 24-hour dedicated live operator and help-desk support team...*and* it could save you money. Would you be interested?

**Linda:** Yeah, of course. Sounds too good to be true though.

**Steve:** Well, let's get together next week for 20 minutes to see if there's a fit. I can answer your questions and show you how our service can achieve all your objectives. What's better for you, mornings or afternoons?

**Linda:** Maybe you can just send me a brochure.

**Steve:** Well, I can do that but how about we just get together in person? I can demonstrate the system for you and I'll bring along some brochures as well.

## Debrief

Despite Linda's putting up a little bit of resistance there at the end, it sounds as though Steve is well on his way to making a sale.

Let's go through in detail how Steve clarifies and summarizes Linda's concerns.

Steve starts off by asking a good needs analysis question, "If you could create the ideal conferencing solution, what about your service would you like to improve or change?" How does Linda respond? She says current system is "unwieldy?" As we learned last time, this means it's difficult to use or handle. However this is not enough information for Steve. To establish a clear need for the service he is selling, he needs to know more from Linda.

**Steve:** What exactly do you mean by that Ms. Darling, if you don't mind me asking?

**Linda:** Linda's fine. Well, we use one company for multiple site audio calls. And another company for video conferencing...

"What exactly do you mean by that" is one way to get more information from the prospect. This is an example of clarifying the meaning. BEP 35, which focused specifically on this topic, would be a great place to review more ways of clarifying.

Now, let's analyze Linda's reply. By "Linda's fine," Linda means that Steve can use her first name; he doesn't need to address her formally any more as "Ms. Darling." This is already a minor victory for Steve; the two of them are getting on more familiar terms.

By "multiple site audio calls," Linda means conferences between several locations. Typically, a conferencing service provider uses special equipment to connect or "bridge" calls between several parties, which can include up to several hundred locations.

Linda's problem is that one company provides the bridging for video, and another company the bridging for audio, and a third company, her own, has to be used to book all the meeting rooms, the actual physical rooms at each location where the meetings will be held.

Now, this is a key moment for Steve. What does he say?

**Steve:** Thanks Linda. I think I'm getting the picture now. From my understanding, what you're truly saying is that there is no centralized system and everything is just a little too complex. Is that about right?

"I think I'm getting the picture now" is an idiom that means, "I think I'm beginning to understand now."

What is Steve doing? He strategically summarizes Linda's need in a way that makes it clear his service will benefit her. Similar to some of the clarifying and paraphrasing skills we studied in BEP35, this is a kind of strategic negotiation of the meaning: To be persuasive, Steve represents Linda's need in a way that makes it clear his service will satisfy that need.

Of course this works well because Steve has a clear value proposition—a clear benefit that differentiates his service from his competitors' services. So obviously it's important to think clearly about the benefit of what you are selling.

What are some other phrases that you can use to strategically summarize and clarify your prospect's needs? Let's practice.

- So what you're really saying here is that you spend way too much time on booking tickets. Is that right?
- I see. So the heart of the matter is that your employees lack confidence in communicating in English? Am I on the mark?
- Uh huh. You're saying that you would love to buy products from China, but you just don't feel secure in trading directly with Chinese companies, right?
- So correct me if I'm wrong, but what you seem to be getting at is that your employee turnover rate is too high for your liking. Is that what you're saying?

Now, you give it a try. Imagine you are cold calling Linda. You have just asked her a needs analysis question. Listen to what she has to say, then strategically summarize it using the language you have just practice. Are you ready?

### Practice 1:

**Linda:** Well, how do I say this? Our current service is just too hard to use, I guess. We use one company for audio, another company for video. And there are always technical problems, but sometimes we have to call three different people to get an answer.

**Learner:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Let's listen now to an example **answer**.

**Linda:** Well, how do I say this. Our current service is just too hard to use, I guess. We use one company for audio, another company for video. And there are always technical problems, but sometimes we have to call three different people to get an answer.

**Learner:** Okay, what you seem to be getting at is that there is no centralized service, no convenient way to get technical support. Is that right?

How did you do? Remember there are many possible replies.

Let's get back to the dialogue. Steve has now summarized Linda's need and gotten a positive response from her—she even helps him out by mentioning that she has technical problems.

Now he is ready to make a pitch by convincingly summarizing how his service can satisfy her needs.

**Steve:** What if told you there was a one-stop service that could handle everything—audio, video, online collaboration, meeting rooms, the works—with a 24-hour dedicated live operator and help-desk support team...and it could save you money. Would you be interested?

You can guess from the context that "the works" means "everything" or "the whole package." The literal meaning comes from ordering food. To ask for a hamburger "with the works," means a hamburger with everything—onions, pickles, lettuce, cheese, tomato—"the whole works!"

"What if I told you..." is one way of summarizing how your service satisfies the prospects needs. This is key moment in your cold call—the pitch or the actual offer of your product or service to the client. Remember the most important thing here is to restate the customer's main challenge and to indicate how your service will overcome that challenge.

Though there are other ways to do it, using a hypothetical if-sentence (past tense plus "would") is a non-threatening way of making your pitch: It is difficult to say "no" to this kind of hypothetical question. And once you've gotten the prospect to say "yes," getting an appointment is one step closer.

- Would it be safe to say that if there was a way for you to overcome your training obstacles, it would be worth discussing in more detail?
- Ms. Smith, if we had a service that specifically addressed all your concerns, would you be interested in learning more about it?
- If we could demonstrate a service that satisfied all of your needs, would you say it would be worth exploring in more detail?

Why don't you give it a try. Think of one of your own company's products or services, or perhaps of an idea that you want to sell to your boss or your colleagues. Next, think about the value proposition—a clear statement of benefit to the customer. Now, using the "What if I told you" approach you just practiced, pitch your product to Linda. Use such language as "would specifically address your concerns," "overcome your challenges," and "satisfy your needs." Are you ready? Give yourself a few seconds to think, then begin talking after the beep.

## Practice 2:

**Learner:** \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Linda:** Yes, I have to say it sounds pretty interesting, almost too good to be true.

Now, listen to an example **answer**.

How did you do? As always, bear in mind that there are countless possible different answers. The point is to practice some of the language you have just learned.

Steve has now stated the benefit in a way that clearly satisfies her needs, and he's framed it in a non-threatening if question. Of course Linda is interested. She says "it sounds too good to be true." This is Steve's sign to ask for an appointment, which is the goal of his call.

**Steve:** Well, let's get together next week for 20 minutes to see if there's a fit. I can answer your questions and show you how our service can achieve all your objectives. What's better for you, mornings or afternoons?

Notice that "get together," like most two- and three-word verbs, is slightly informal or casual: It's definitely easier for Linda to agree to a casual meeting, so this is also strategic use of language. Also, as Steve has done, it's good to mention how much time you will need when you ask for the meeting.

What are some other ways to schedule the next step?

- Then let's meet up for 20 minutes to discuss the possibilities. I will answer your questions, share with you several options as well as demonstrate how our product service will specifically fulfill your objectives.
- Mr. Smith do you have your calendar handy? What day would be good for you—towards the beginning or the end of the week?

"To have something handy" means to have it within reach, so "Do you have your calendar handy?" means "Is your calendar nearby?" Also, notice the good use of collocations, such as "fulfill objectives," "share several options," and "discuss the possibilities."

Well, that just about brings us to the end of the show. Today we've covered some key selling skills: Strategically clarifying and summarizing your prospect's concerns and incorporating them into your pitch to make it more persuasive.

Next time, in the third part of this series, we'll study how to deal with some typical negative responses, such as "I'm too busy," or "Please send me a brochure."

In the meantime, don't forget to check out the learner's notes at our website, [www.businessenglishpod.com](http://www.businessenglishpod.com). There you can find vocabulary and definitions, a full transcript, listening and language exercises, and additional strategies for practicing your English—the whole works!

Thanks again for listening and take care. See you next time at [businessenglishpod.com](http://businessenglishpod.com)!

## Language Review Questions

### Exercise A:

Use the language in the box to fill in the blanks of these cold calling tips.

<b>a. eager</b>	<b>c. person's</b>	<b>e. alternative</b>	<b>g. relevance</b>
<b>b. appointments</b>	<b>d. ramble</b>	<b>f. introduce</b>	<b>h. pretend</b>

- 1) Get the \_\_\_\_\_ name right.
- 2) Ask at least one question to establish \_\_\_\_\_ before launching into a sales pitch.
- 3) Don't \_\_\_\_\_ on—that means, don't be too long-winded and keep your introduction brief.
- 4) Don't \_\_\_\_\_ irrelevant information.
- 5) Don't \_\_\_\_\_ to have knowledge you don't have.
- 6) Don't sound too \_\_\_\_\_ - it'll make you sound unprofessional or desperate.
- 7) Don't offer too many \_\_\_\_\_ times and dates for an appointment—this may be confusing or overwhelming to the client.
- 8) Confirm \_\_\_\_\_ in writing.

### Exercise B:

When you conduct a cold call, it's generally not a good idea to have it fully scripted. However, there is an overall structure that you can follow to be more persuasive. This involves thinking of the benefit of your product and of several questions that you can ask to analyze the needs of your prospect.

Put the following steps in order. One has already been done for you.

<b>1.</b>	<b>a.</b> Turn around negative responses
<b>2.</b> <i>G. Establish relevance</i>	<b>b.</b> Make your pitch with an "if question."
<b>3.</b>	<b>c.</b> Turn around negative responses.
<b>4.</b>	<b>d.</b> Schedule the next step.
<b>5.</b>	<b>e.</b> Ask open questions to understand the prospect's needs
<b>6.</b>	<b>f.</b> Briefly introduce the benefit of your product or service
<b>7.</b>	<b>g.</b> Establish relevance
<b>8.</b>	<b>h.</b> Respect your prospect's time

## Learning Tip

For each of the steps above, think of some typical language you can use. It might be useful to list out the language, to draw a chart, to write a dialogue or to make flashcards. Think specifically of the product or service you are selling, and develop needs analysis questions and clarifying and summarizing questions that specifically address that benefit.

If you are not in sales, you might do the same exercise for an idea that you have to present to your colleagues. When you've prepared, practice on a colleague or a friend: It's best to use the telephone or to sit back to back to simulate the experience of talking on the phone, where there is no visual feedback. After you've finished, ask your friend how your voice sounds. Also, it's a good idea to record yourself speaking so that you can listen yourself to the tone of your voice. Don't just get feedback from one person: Often different people will have different ideas, and your voice adapts to different situations, so you'll need to talk to several people about your voice before you come to a more objective view.

## Answers

### Listening Comprehension:

1. Linda says that it's "unwieldy," which means it's difficult to use or handle. This is the main issue. As Steve says, Linda's current service is not centralized and it's too complex. Also, Linda mentions that there are frequent technical problems.
2. What does Steve mean by "one-stop" service? Steve is selling one centralized service that handles all conferencing needs, including booking meeting rooms and audio, video and web conferencing. It's a "one-stop" service because the customer only needs to use one supplier—one "stop"—to satisfy all its needs.
3. What does Linda suggest instead of meeting with Steve? She wants him just to send her a brochure. But he successfully turns around this negative response in order to schedule a meeting with her.

### Language Exercises:

#### Exercise A:

1) c; 2) g; 3) h; 4) f; 5) h. 6) a.; 7) e.; 8) b.

#### Exercise B:

- 1) h. Respect your prospect's time
- 2) g. Establish relevance
- 3) f. Briefly introduce the benefit of your product or service
- 4) e. Ask open questions to understand the prospect's needs
- 5) a. Clarify the prospect's needs.
- 6) b. Make your pitch with an "if question."
- 7) d. Schedule the next step.
- 8) a. Turn around negative responses



## Useful Language

### ***Strategically summarizing and clarifying your prospects needs:***

- So what you're really saying here is that you spend way too much time on booking tickets. Is that right?
- I see. So the heart of the matter is that your employees lack confidence in communicating in English? Am I on the mark?
- Uh huh. You're saying that you would love to buy products from China, but you just don't feel secure in trading directly with Chinese companies, right?
- So correct me if I'm wrong, but what you seem to be getting at is that your employee turnover rate is too high for your liking. Is that what you're saying?

### **Stating your pitch using a hypothetical question:**

- Would it be safe to say that if there was a way for you to overcome your training obstacles, it would be worth discussing in more detail?
- Ms. Smith, if we had a service that specifically addressed all your concerns, would you be interested in learning more about it?
- If we could demonstrate a service that satisfied all of your needs, would you say it would be worth exploring in more detail?

### ***Scheduling the next step:***

- Then let's meet up for 20 minutes to discuss the possibilities. I will answer your questions, share with you several options as well as demonstrate how our product service will specifically fulfill your objectives.
- Mr. Smith do you have your calendar handy? What day would be good for you—towards the beginning or the end of the week?