



This is “The Preapproach: The Power of Preparation”, chapter 8 from the book [Powerful Selling \(index.html\)](#) (v. 1.0).

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Chapter 8

The Preapproach: The Power of Preparation

Video Ride-Along with Tonya Murphy, General Sales Manager at Radio Station WBEN-FM

You met Tonya Murphy in [Chapter 3 "The Power of Building Relationships: Putting Adaptive Selling to Work"](#) when she talked about the power of relationships. Part of building relationships that work is doing your homework. It's not enough to simply use the information you gathered when you were prospecting and qualifying.

Ride along with Tonya and learn how she researches and develops an "I know" statement as part of her preapproach before every sales call.

[\(click to see video\)](#)

8.1 Researching Your Prospect: Going Deeper

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Explain how to research a qualified prospect and list resources to conduct prospect research.

Spring break is just around the corner. You and your friends definitely want to go away somewhere great. You decide on Cancún, Mexico, as a destination. Since you want to get the best plane fare and hotel rate, you will have to book early. That means planning, coordinating, and even doing some research on the area. You want everything to be perfect—after all, this is spring break.

Just as preparation made your spring break trip come together perfectly, preparation also makes a sales call successful. By now you've identified and qualified your prospects, you've come up with an action plan, and you're probably eager to get down to business. However, you can't just call your prospect or show up at his door without doing your homework first. How big is his business? What are his business goals? What is his company culture? Is he already doing business with any of your competitors? In what ways do your products or services present a solution he could use? The preapproach, or the process of finding out the answers to these questions, is critical. Neil Rakham, *The SPIN Selling Fieldbook* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996), 39. Doing your research and coming prepared gets your prospect's attention and shows him that you care. It gives you the power to sell adaptively and puts you ahead of your competitors.

Keep in mind that when someone ultimately decides to do business with you, he is trusting you with one of the things that's most important to him—his money. Furthermore, he is trusting in you above all other people and companies to help him with his challenges. Consider that your company is using personal selling because customers want additional information or customization of the product or service in order to make a decision. People only buy from people they trust. C. J. Ng, "Customers Don't Buy from People They Like, They Buy from Those They Trust," *EzineArticles*, August 7, 2008, <http://ezinearticles.com/?Customers- Dont-Buy-From-People-They-Like,-They-Buy-From-Those-They-Trust&id=1391175> (accessed July 15, 2009). You have to earn that trust every day. The first step starts here: how well are you prepared to earn his respect and trust?

Gather Information

By the time you're ready for the preapproach, you've already done some initial research as part of the qualifying process. With the preapproach, you take your research to the next level; you find out as much as you possibly can about the company or individual with whom you want to do business. As marketing and strategy expert Noel Capon says, a thorough understanding of your prospect's business processes and challenges gives you the crucial insights you'll need to offer specific, workable solutions your customers can use. Gathering this information demonstrates personal commitment and boosts your credibility with your prospects. Noel Capon, *Key Account Management and Planning* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 142.

Your research will pay off whether you're preparing to contact a new prospect—a **target account**¹—or whether you're working with an existing customer. In [Chapter 7 "Prospecting and Qualifying: The Power to Identify Your Customers"](#), you read that some of your best prospects are the customers you already have. It's particularly important to identify your **key accounts**², your current customers who are—or have the potential to be—your most significant sources of sales. Maybe you sell insurance, and you've contracted with a large restaurant chain to provide their employee health and dental plan. This key account is one of the largest companies with whom you do business, so you make an extra effort to stay informed about developments that affect this company. You've recently received a news alert that due to an unstable economy the restaurant chain has decided to cut employee hours. As a result, many of the staff members are now working part-time and no longer qualify for full health benefits. Based on this information, you call your contact at the company and offer to provide a more flexible and less expensive partial employee benefits package for which their part-time workers could still qualify. You tell her that this solution will serve her company's need to cut costs and will allow them to retain employees who might otherwise become dissatisfied and leave.

Whether you're contacting new or existing customers, it's important to have your specific call objectives in mind and to clearly map out the information you've already gathered about the company so that you can refer to it during the call. You can keep this information organized using a **precall planning worksheet**³ that lists the key company statistics you've identified as part of your research and includes a checklist detailing the purpose of the call: the information you'd like to learn about the company, the solutions or key facts you plan to communicate, and any other goals you hope to achieve. The worksheet doesn't have to be complex; it can be as straightforward as the sample in [Figure 8.1 "Precall Planning Worksheet"](#). Your customer relationship management (CRM) or contact management system (CMS)

1. A new, qualified prospect.
2. An existing customer that is (or has the potential to be) a significant source of sales for your company.
3. A document that details the goals you hope to achieve during a particular sales call.

may also provide a place for you to do your precall planning work. A sample precall planning worksheet is shown in [Figure 8.1 "Precall Planning Worksheet"](#).

Figure 8.1 *Precall Planning Worksheet*

Sample Precall Planning Worksheet	
Company:	
Contact:	
Phone:	
Location:	
Source of Lead:	
Key facts I already know about...	
The company:	
My contact/prospect there:	
Goals to achieve by end of call	
Information I plan to gather about the company:	
Information I plan to gather about my contact/prospect:	
Information the prospect should know about me/my company:	
Specific actions the prospect should agree to take:	
How the company should feel about working with me/us:	

Listing your goals in writing before you make a sales call gives you the power to measure the success of your call. Did you get the information you needed? Did you communicate the information you listed in your checklist? If not, how can you adapt your approach and set goals for your next sales call?

Going Deeper with the Fundamentals: What You’ll Want to Know

The first sales call (or calls) is often an extension of the qualifying process. Even if the company passes initial qualification, as you learn more you might find out that they aren’t your ideal customers after all. You might discover that your contact at the company is about to leave or change positions. Or you might realize that the company’s current situation isn’t one in which they’re willing or able to buy. The following are some things you’ll want to know as you research the company during your preapproach.

About the Company

- **Demographics.** Understanding the basics will help you ensure the company fits your ideal prospect profile and allow you to tailor your solution to fit the company's particular situation. What kind of business is it? How large is the business? How many locations do they have? How many people work for them? Where is the home office located? How many years have they been in business?
- **Company news.** Tracking company news is another way to discover opportunities for sales. Has the company put out any recent press releases? (You can generally find these on the company Web site in the investor relations, press release, or press room section.) Has the company recently appeared in the news? (Setting up Google News Alerts at <http://www.google.com/alerts> for your current and potential customers will keep you up-to-date on this.)

Don't just read the news; creatively think about what the news is telling you about selling opportunities with a prospect. For example, if you were selling paper goods (cups, lids, straws, bags, cup jackets, napkins, etc.) to coffee shops, you would have read a press release about the test marketing of McCafés several months before the national launch. Then you would have read about the announcement of the national launch a few months before it was planned to occur. These press releases are selling opportunities. You might think it would only be a selling opportunity if you were selling to McDonald's, but that's not true. The fact is McDonald's announced that it was about to expand the market for premium coffee. That's an opportunity to help your customers and prospects. For example, what if you suggested that your customers and prospects print an advertisement on their bags, napkins, cups, and cup jackets to announce a promotion called "Morning Joe Wake-up Call"? "Buy a cup of coffee every day for ten days and get a free cup of Joe!" This helps increase their sales, which ultimately increases your sales. You could bring this idea to your customer or prospect in advance of the McCafé launch and discuss how your idea can help him build his brand prior to the competitive effort. Now that's using company news to drive sales. Gerry Tabio, "Creative Solutions," presentation at Greater Media Philadelphia Sales Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, May 14, 2009.

- **Financial performance.** Keeping up-to-date on the company's financial performance will help you determine whether your prospect is currently able to buy, which might lead you to discover sales opportunities. All publicly held companies are required to post their quarterly earnings on their websites. Generally there will be a link for "investors" or "investor relations" on the company home page that

will take you to financial data, including a recording of the company's quarterly earnings conference call. It's a good idea to listen to these conference calls to learn important information about the company's strategy and financial performance.

Link

Listen to the Most Current Quarterly Earnings Conference Call for Macy's

<http://phx.corporate-ir.net/phoenix.zhtml?c=84477&p=irol-webcasts>

About the Company's Customers

- **Customer demographics.** Are the company's products used by businesses or individual consumers? If consumers, what age, education, and income level? If businesses, what size and kind of businesses? Knowing the organization's customer demographics will help you tailor your solution to the company. For instance, if you're selling clothing designs to Old Navy, knowing that the company appeals to families and that it draws in value-conscious customers, you might send them samples from your more basic and reasonably priced clothing line, rather than your top-of-the-line products or your trendiest designs.

Figure 8.2



Understanding customer demographics can provide important insight for selling. For example, each of the customers shown above has different demographics and different needs.

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- **Size of customer base.** In B2B sales, it's important to know whether your prospect serves many customers or primarily works with a few large accounts. Microsoft, for example, sells its products to large corporations, but they also deal with individual consumers. Some companies, on the other hand, work with a few large accounts, so their success is very dependent on the success of their key customers. If your prospect is a sporting goods manufacturer that only sells its products to Dick's Sporting Goods, Dick's Sporting Goods' financial performance will affect the performance of your prospect's business.
- **What customers are saying about your prospect.** You can learn a lot about a company by paying attention to its reputation with customers. If the business has a lousy customer service record, they might not treat their vendors well either. This is why it's worthwhile to read customer reviews as part of your qualifying process. For instance, if you do business with airline companies, you might prefer to fly with Southwest (whose customer reviews say things like "This is an airline I'll use again and again!") than United Airlines (where one reviewer writes, "United Airlines hands down has the worst customer service of any company I have ever dealt with"). For large companies, doing a Google search will often bring up customer reviews on the organization, or you can try a Web site like Epinions. For local companies, try searching your regional Better Business Bureau (BBB) to see if any customer complaints have been filed against the company.

Figure 8.3



Customer reviews can tell you a lot about a company and help you identify your best prospects, as in the case of the customer reviews for Southwest Airlines compared to those for United Airlines.

© 2010 Jupiterimages Corporation

About the Current Buying Situation

- **Type of purchase.** In Chapter 6 "Why and How People Buy: The Power of Understanding the Customer", you learned the different types of

buys—straight rebuy, modified rebuy, or strategic alliance. Knowing that information is extremely valuable during your preapproach research. Is the customer making a first-time purchase of the product? (For instance, maybe you're selling disaster recovery services to a company that has previously lived with the risk of not having their data backed up.) Or will this purchase be a rebuy? Maybe the customer is an interior design firm. The firm already buys paint from a certain supplier but is thinking of making a modified rebuy: purchasing a more environmentally friendly line of paints, either from the same supplier or from someone else (hopefully you!). On the other hand, maybe the design firm is already buying from you and is perfectly happy with the paints and with you as a supplier, so it decides to make a straight rebuy of the same product. It's also possible that your prospect is considering a strategic alliance with your company in which your organizations would make an agreement to share resources. For example, Pepsi has a strategic alliance with Frontier Airlines in which Frontier agrees that all the soft drinks it serves on board the airline will be Pepsi brand. "Frontier Airlines Partners with Pepsi," *Breaking Travel News*, January 9, 2003, <http://www.breakingtravelnews.com/article.php?story=40005018&query=inflight> (accessed July 15, 2009). Knowing the type of purchase will help you position your solution to best fit the situation.

- **Competitor/current provider.** If your prospect is already buying from another company, you'll want to know who your competitor is. What do you know about this company and their products? Most important, what are your competitor's strengths and weaknesses? Consider the interior design firm that is about to make a rebuy. If you've done your research, you might be able to tell the firm, "I know your current supplier offers a high-quality paint product in a wide range of color choices. Our company offers a wide range of color choices, too, and our product consistently gets high reviews. However, unlike your current provider, we also have a line of soy-based paints, which are better for the environment and for your customers' and employees' health than the regular latex variety. Using soy-based paints will increase your reputation as a progressive, socially responsible business." Knowing your prospect's current supplier gives you the power to favorably position your product by highlighting the things that set you apart from the competition.
- **Current pricing.** If the information is available, find out what your prospect's current supplier charges for their product or service. This information will give you the edge to competitively position your solution. If you charge less than your competitors, you can highlight your product as a cost-saving alternative. If your products cost more, you might consider offering a discount or other benefit to provide a

better solution. On the other hand, if your products are more expensive because they're of a higher quality, you should emphasize that fact. For example, soy-based paint is generally more expensive than latex paint, but depending on your customer's needs, the extra cost might be worth the benefits of a healthier, "greener" product.

Video Clip

Preparation Is Essential

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Listen to Priya Masih, sales representative at Lupin Pharmaceuticals, talk about how she prepares for a sales call.

About the Contact Person

- **Title and role in the company.** This is basic and essential information to know. It will help you to personalize your communications and will give you a better sense of your business situation. What role does this person have in the buying decision? Are you dealing with an influencer in the organization? Does this contact person have the authority to make a buying decision, or is this person a gatekeeper, a person with whom you must talk in order to get to the decision maker?
- **Professional background.** How long has this person been at the company, and what positions has he held? What roles has he had at other companies? This information will help you to adapt your communications and solutions to the individual. You can find valuable information on professional social networks such as LinkedIn and Plaxo.com and use it as you prepare your approach and presentation. For instance, you might find out that someone in your network knows the person you are planning to approach and she can provide an entry for you. You might also learn that the person you plan on calling on was previously a buyer at two other companies and usually likes to bring in his previous vendors. If that's the case, you might adapt your approach to include benefits that you have brought to other buyers who switched to your company.
- **Personal information.** Everyone likes to do business with people they like. Learning what you can about your contact's family, hobbies, and interests demonstrates that you care about him as an individual and helps you build a relationship with your customer. This is useful information to keep on hand for the opening of the sales call when you want to put your prospect at ease and convince him of your goodwill.

And it's good information to use as follow-up or just to keep in touch. ("I know you are a huge University of Florida fan so I thought you would enjoy this video of the team's summer training camp.")

- **Essential problem(s) your contact needs to solve.** Knowing this information takes you right to the heart of the issue. Maybe your prospect is the marketing manager at the company and has recently been given the task of finding a new breakthrough idea for a promotional product to give away at a major upcoming industry trade show. Or maybe your prospect owns a grocery chain and needs to increase her sales in the frozen food area with organic products. Learning the specific problems your contact faces in his role at the company is the only way you can adapt your solution to meet his needs. The best way to identify your prospect's problem (or opportunity) is to do extensive research on the company.
- **Motivation for buying.** If your contact is already buying from another supplier, what reasons might he have to start buying from you instead? For instance, is he dissatisfied with the quality of his current provider's service or the price of the product? If he is satisfied, what value can you bring that provides a reason for him to consider changing suppliers? On the other hand, if this is a first time purchase, what will drive his initial decision to buy?

About Your Existing Customers

Your current customers are your best prospects. While you might be excited about a new account, make sure you don't spend so much time and energy on new prospects that you neglect the ones with whom you've already established a relationship.

- **Opportunities to expand the relationship.** There's no better place to increase your sales than with your existing customers. They know you and your product or service, you know them and their needs and challenges. So start by leveraging the information you already know about your customer's business. This is the best way to expand your relationship. For instance, if you have sold fitness equipment to a regional chain of health clubs and you know that it is important for them to minimize maintenance costs and down time, you could target the buyer as a prospect for the new line of weight machines with hydraulics. You could also expand your research and determine how much money the club could save in a year based on the number of machines and include that as part of your presentation. This is establishing your **value proposition**⁴, what you have to offer that your prospect or customer is willing to pay for.

4. The benefits of the product or service that a customer is willing to pay for.

If your customer is using some of your services in combination with your competitor's services, this is also a sales opportunity: find out how satisfied your customer is with the competitor's services and see if you can come up with a better solution. ("You're currently using our hydraulic weight machines, but I see that you're buying your exercise machines from this other company. Did you know that we offer treadmills, exercise bikes, and elliptical machines that come with free maintenance and product replacement guarantees?") If your customer has a contract with this competitor, finding out when the contract expires will help you time your sales call effectively. Marcel Sim, "Leveraging Your CRM System to Expand Your Client Relationships," *Get Entrepreneurial*, August 12, 2008, <http://www.getentrepreneurial.com/customer-service/leveraging-your-crm-system-to-expand-your-client-relationships.html> (accessed July 15, 2009).

And what about your contracts with the customer? If you have a **service-level agreement (SLA)**⁵ with the customer, you can leverage this opportunity to strengthen the customer relationship. SLAs define the terms of the service you will provide, and they generally expire after a certain length of time (think about the contract you have with your cell phone provider). Establish open lines of communication to make sure your customer is consistently satisfied with your service. You might discuss expanded service options he can purchase, or you could offer a discount for renewing the contract early. Consider giving a short survey to gauge your customer's satisfaction level and find out whether there are additional services you might be able to offer her.

You can also consider moving into other departments of the organization: use your CRM system to track the organizational structure of the company and find the influencers in other departments. Of course, you can ask your current contacts at the company for referrals of other prospective buyers within the company. Marcel Sim, "Leveraging Your CRM System to Expand Your Client Relationships," *Get Entrepreneurial*, August 12, 2008, <http://www.getentrepreneurial.com/customer-service/leveraging-your-crm-system-to-expand-your-client-relationships.html> (accessed July 15, 2009). Maybe you're formatting documents for the research branch of the company, but you know the company also has a communications department that puts out brochures, reports, and newsletters. You can scan your CRM database (or look on the company's Web site) for the names of managers in the communications department and ask your contact in the research department if he could give you a good referral.

5. A contract between a customer and a service provider that sets out the frequency, length of time, and expectations for providing the service.

- **Opportunities for synergy.** How can you partner with your customer in new ways that will benefit both companies? For instance, maybe there's an opportunity for a strategic alliance like the one between Pepsi and Frontier Airlines: Frontier buys exclusively from Pepsi, while Pepsi helps promote Frontier. Or are there additional services or products you offer that, used in combination with your customer's current purchases, would create an even stronger solution? For example, Linksys has its Linksys One program, which offers B2B customers high-speed wireless networks combined with an Internet telephone service and several software services. By combining one company's software and hardware products and services, customers are able to streamline their work, creating a simpler, more efficient system. Shonan Noronha, "The Joy of Work," *Inc.*, August 1, 2007, <http://www.inc.com/sourcebook/prup/20070801.html> (accessed July 15, 2009). If you can demonstrate potential **synergy**⁶ with an existing customer—that is, collaboration that produces greater results than individual products, services, or parties could produce alone—you have an opportunity to expand your business with that customer.

Sources of Information

When you want to dig deeper with your research, you can often return to the same sources you used during the qualifying process and simply get more specific with the information you gather.

- **Online searches.** Search online databases and directories such as Hoovers and current news stories on Yahoo! Finance, Bloomberg, and other business Web sites (see [Chapter 7 "Prospecting and Qualifying: The Power to Identify Your Customers"](#) for a complete list of sources for company information) to find out about company demographics and key people in the organization. If you want to learn more detailed information about your contacts in the company, try online professional social networks like LinkedIn.
- **Business directories.** Remember the value of your local library where you can search business directories in print and access some online directories free of charge.
- **Publicly available contracts.** Real estate closings, government contracts, and other vital information that is part of public records can help provide pricing, terms, and other important data that can help you benchmark against the competition and better understand your prospect's current situation.
- **Trade journals.** Trade journals are a good source for learning more about people and companies in your target industry. Making a habit of

6. The working together of two or more things (companies, services, technology, ideas) that produces a greater effect than any one of those things could produce alone.

reading these publications (or subscribing to RSS [Really Simple Syndication] feeds, as described in [Chapter 7 "Prospecting and Qualifying: The Power to Identify Your Customers"](#)) helps keep you up-to-date on developments in these companies and in the industry.

- **Blogs, social networks, and online forums.** These online resources can provide insight about the prospect, the competition, and the environment. Many company employees and executives post regularly about their perceptions and feelings on many topics. These comments can provide valuable insight about the prospect.
- **Professional organizations.** Joining professional organizations (in person and online) can help you build relationships with contacts at your target companies. These organizations also serve as a source for competitive knowledge and for your connection to industry buzz.

In addition to these sources you've already used, consider another powerful resource: people. If you've already formed a relationship with key people in your target company, you can ask them for referrals to influencers in other departments of the organization. Your contacts at an organization have inside knowledge and will usually be able to tell you whom to talk to if you want to make something happen. If they're satisfied with the service you've been providing, these contacts are often happy to give you the names of others who might be able to use your solutions. Complementary salespeople can also be an excellent source of information about a prospect. For example, if you are selling computer hardware you might find nuggets of information from the person who sells office furniture. You can help each other by sharing insights and information.

It might surprise you to know that competitive salespeople can also be a resource. If you're a member of a professional organization, if you attend conferences or tradeshow, or if you're simply connected in your community, you'll probably know competitive salespeople. While your competitor isn't going to give you the inside scoop on a prospect he's currently pursuing, he might share some useful insights about companies or people he has worked with in the past. Maybe he used to do business with one of your current contacts and can tell you things to avoid or things that will impress her. ("She will eat you alive if you don't have all your information.") Maybe one of your target companies is an organization he has sold to in the past, and he has some useful advice about the way they work. Never underestimate the power of relationships and networking.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The preapproach is a critical step that helps you earn your customer's trust and sell adaptively; this is true whether you are meeting with a new customer—a **target account**—or an existing customer—one of your **key accounts**.
- Before you make your sales call, you should know the objectives of the meeting. You should record these objectives, along with basic company information, on a **precall planning worksheet**.
- Preapproach research includes information like company demographics, company news, and financial performance to help you discover sales opportunities and go deeper in your qualifying process.
- Research the company's customers, the current buying situation, and your contact person at the company to help you tailor your sales approach.
- Research your existing customers to find opportunities for expanding the relationship and creating more sales.

EXERCISES

1. Assume you have identified Gap as a prospect for your product line called “Green” Jeans, blue jeans made with completely recycled materials. You are preparing for a sales call with the denim buyer in the Gap’s home office. What demographic information would you gather about the company during the preapproach stage? What would recent company news tell you in preparation for your sales call? What do current customers think about Gap? What is your value proposition, and how does it fit Gap’s need?
2. Imagine you work for a company that sells interior design services and acts as an art broker (finding and purchasing artwork to display) for large companies. One of your customers has used your broker services in the past, but you are hoping to expand the relationship. What additional information would you need to know to make a proposal?
3. Assume you are selling payroll services to small businesses. Identify three pieces of information you would learn about your prospect during your preapproach research and identify the sources where you would find the information.
4. Imagine that you sell life insurance. Describe how customer demographics can help you with your preapproach research.
5. Assume you are selling security systems and you have just qualified a prospect, Fine Dining, Inc., that owns a chain of fifteen restaurants in the area. Your contact is Lee Crowan, the operations manager. The corporate office is located in the Willowood Corporate Center in Willowood. You have learned that the chain is growing, with expansion to ten new restaurants planned in the next twelve months. You have also learned that security is a major issue since two of the existing restaurants have had break-ins during the past six months. Complete a precall planning worksheet for your upcoming call with Lee Crowan at Fine Dining, Inc.
6. Assume you are selling financial services to consumers. You have identified a couple in their forties as qualified prospects. They are interested in retirement planning. What are three questions you would ask them during your initial meeting with them?

8.2 Solving, Not Selling

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Understand how to identify needs and opportunities.

Imagine you wanted to sell a new digital camera to your teenage sister. How would you convince her to buy? You might start by thinking of the things that matter to teenagers—specifically your sister. Maybe you'd say, "It's small and lightweight so you can fit it in your purse and take it with you when you go out with your friends. It has a new sleek design, and you can customize it by ordering it in one of six different colors." You've considered things your sister might need (a camera she can take on a night out), and you've identified an opportunity that might appeal to a teenaged girl (a combination of appearance, style, and functionality).

Now what if you were selling the same product to your grandmother? She might be more concerned with reliability than appearance, and she might also be intimidated about using a digital camera if it's a technology she hasn't tried before. "This camera doesn't have a lot of bells and whistles," you could say. "It's straightforward and easy to use and makes an excellent choice for a first digital camera purchase. It's perfect for taking pictures of the grandkids. It has also been highly rated as a reliable and high-quality product." You've addressed her problem (intimidation about using a new technology), and you've helped her discover opportunities (taking photos of the grandkids).

Even though you're selling the same product to both people, you're using a very different approach. Ultimately, what you're selling is not a product but a *solution* based on your customer's specific needs. This is the heart of the preapproach. There are three simple steps you can follow to turn your products and services into customer-specific solutions.

Step 1: Complete a Needs and Opportunity Analysis

Great salespeople don't sell, they solve. As you research your prospect, you should be able to identify problems that are specific to that person or organization: Do they need to reduce costs? Do they need to increase sales? Do they need to drive traffic to a Web site or generate leads for their new service? Or maybe they need something that will set their brand apart from their competitors. In the case of individual consumers, the problem might be very different: Does she want to have

the latest in fashion without couture prices? Does she want the latest technology “toys” as soon as they are available? Does she want a car that is a dependable form of transportation and friendly to the environment?

Sometimes people are forthcoming about their problems, but many times it’s up to you to ask the *right* questions; the ones that will uncover what your prospect needs or where opportunities exist. (Remember from [Chapter 1 "The Power to Get What You Want in Life"](#) that is one of the traits of a successful salesperson.) For instance, if your prospect is buying from a competitor, you might ask questions like “What were your expectations when you signed up for this service? What has your actual experience of the service been? What would you like to see happen differently?” The prospect might not fully realize what his problems are. Paul Cherry, *Questions That Sell: The Powerful Process for Discovering What Your Customer Really Wants* (New York: AMACOM, 2006), 25. Often, especially in B2B sales, the goal of your first sales call will simply be to identify your prospect’s specific areas of need. You won’t make a pitch; you’ll just ask questions and listen. Mark Anthony, “The Psychology of Selling,” BNET, April 1995, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3629/is_199504/ai_n8730867/?tag=content;col1 (accessed July 15, 2009).

Asking questions often opens up opportunities you might not otherwise discover. There will be occasions when your prospect doesn’t have an immediate problem she can identify, but if you’ve done your research and know something about her goals and priorities and if you ask the right questions, you have the chance to uncover useful opportunities. What can help him achieve his goals even more efficiently? What kinds of results would he like to see? Geoffrey James, “Solution Selling Is Dead,” BNET, October 29, 2007, <http://blogs.bnet.com/salesmachine/?p=158&tag=content;col1> (accessed July 15, 2009). What would he like to have if he only knew it was possible?

Think about the advent of the cell phone. Consumers had a problem: their lives were getting busier, and they wanted to be able to communicate on the go. They needed a phone they could use when they weren’t at home or in the office. What do you do on a car trip if you get lost or your car breaks down? How do you find someone in a crowded place? How can people get in touch with you if you’re almost never home? Cell phone providers figured out consumers’ problems, and they solved them. Then along came the iPhone. Most cell phone users wouldn’t have said they *needed* a device that could capture videos and photographs, play MP3s, store a day planner, surf the web, run hundreds of different applications—oh, and make phone calls too—using a single slick interface. But Apple saw an opportunity, and they helped consumers to see it too: over a million iPhones sold the first weekend the product came out in stores. Philip Elmer-DeWitt, “Munster: 500,000 New iPhones This Weekend,” *Fortune*, June 18, 2009, <http://apple20.blogs.fortune.cnn.com/2009/06/18/munster-500000-new-iphones-this-weekend/> (accessed July 15, 2009).

Step 2: Brainstorm Solutions and Generate Ideas

Once you've identified your customer's problems, take the time—either with a team or on your own—to brainstorm solutions and opportunities that address your prospect's specific needs. Sometimes solving your prospect's problem is a straightforward task, but often with larger sales, particularly B2B sales, coming up with a solution that is tailored to your customer's needs requires time and thought. No two prospects are the same, so no two solutions will be exactly the same. When Joel Ronning, CEO of e-commerce company Digital River, wants to solve customer problems and generate ideas, he sits down with the senior employees of his company for a brainstorming session. The technique has boosted sales, earned the company hundreds of thousands of dollars, and led to a small business award for "best idea." Allison Stein Wellner, "A Perfect Brainstorm," *Inc.*, October 1, 2003, <http://www.inc.com/magazine/20031001/strategies.html> (accessed July 15, 2009). As a salesperson, your job is to solve customer problems, *not* push a product. In other words, you're offering solutions that include unique and different ideas, not selling products. For this reason, brainstorming—the process of generating ideas—is a crucial part of the selling process.

When you go into a brainstorming session, there are several techniques that will help you generate effective results.

- **Know your problem or opportunity.** If you've already completed your needs analysis, you're off to a good start. According to James Feldman, a Chicago-based idea-generation consultant, "Most people do not identify their problem correctly" going into the brainstorming session. Once you have a clear idea of the problem or opportunity, set it out in specific terms to guide your brainstorm. Just make sure you don't define the problem so narrowly that you'll limit your results. Start the session by stating the objective. What problem do you want to solve? It also helps to frame the question in positive terms. For example, rather than asking "How will this company's new computer system change the way they do business?" you could ask "How can this company get the most out of their new computer system?" Allison Stein Wellner, "A Perfect Brainstorm," *Inc.*, October 1, 2003, <http://www.inc.com/magazine/20031001/strategies.html> (accessed July 15, 2009).
- **Generate; don't evaluate.** Brainstorming isn't about coming up with the best, most carefully polished solutions. As Gary Kopervas, chief creative strategist at Backe Digital Brand Marketing, says, "When you're brainstorming, don't be perfect; be prolific." Get your ideas out there, on paper, without disrupting the flow. Once you've exhausted your resources, you can worry about sorting out the stronger ideas

from the weaker ones. If you're too critical of your ideas to begin with, you'll never access that part of your brain where the creative ideas are generated. In fact, Kopervas has devised the Five Fs of Brainstorming to guide a more effective process. They are outlined in [Figure 8.4 "Five Fs of Brainstorming"](#). Adapted from Gary Kopervas, "More Effective Brainstorming," presentation at Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia, PA, October 28, 2008.

Figure 8.4 Five Fs of Brainstorming

Element	Description
Focus	Start with an objective; identify the problem you want to solve.
Flow	Invite a diverse group of people to participate to get a mix of ideas.
Freshness	Use critical customer insights to ignite idea generation.
Follow-through	Appoint a scribe for each brainstorming session to take notes, then prioritize and digitize.
Frequency	Incorporate brainstorming into as many activities as frequently as possible; the more often you brainstorm, the better you will get at it.

- **Push beyond the wall.** At some point during every brainstorming session, whether group brainstorming or individual, people tend to hit a wall. Ideas flow quickly, and then they seem to stop altogether. Cognitive psychologist Paul Paulus says this point in the session may seem like a wall, but in reality it's just "a space in [the] brain." Pushing past this space often leads to the best ideas. Allison Stein Wellner, "A Perfect Brainstorm," *Inc.*, October 1, 2003, <http://www.inc.com/magazine/20031001/strategies.html> (accessed July 15, 2009).
- **Seek strategic stimuli.** Sometimes you have to disrupt your normal routine to get the ideas flowing. Putting yourself in a new environment or doing something with your hands—molding clay, for instance—can often be a surprising way to unlock ideas in your subconscious that your rational mind might otherwise block off.

Brainstorming, as an idea-generation tool, is a proven and powerful part of creative development. However, keep in mind that some of the ideas you come up with in the brainstorming process will be stronger than others. A great idea has two important elements: it solves your customer's problems and, in B2B sales, it reinforces your customer's brand. Consider consultant Mike Rubin's solution to a problem faced by one of his customers, a Harley-Davidson dealer, who wanted to

boost sales and appeal to a broader customer base. Mike's Famous Harley-Davidson Dealership was already drawing in the "hard-core" bikers, but the store's owner wanted to reach the more conservative, baby boomer demographic too. By turning the dealership into a destination, complete with a Harley museum and restaurant, Rubin hit on a solution that both addressed the customer's problem and remained true to the Harley brand image. The restaurant, designed to resemble a factory cafeteria, appealed to tough bikers and families alike, and the museum—also a family-friendly draw—was laid out in a warehouse style that reflected the company's brand image of independence, toughness, and the open road. The result? In three years, bike sales increased from 800 to over 1,700 annually. Donna Fen, "(Re)born to Be Wild," *Inc.*, January 2006, <http://www.inc.com/magazine/20060101/reborn.html> (accessed July 15, 2009).

Power Selling: Lessons in Selling from Successful Brands

They Practice What They Preach

Ideo, a premier product development company, believes that innovation is the only path to success. Collaboration and idea generation are a way of life at the company that invented the Apple mouse, Polaroid I-Zone pocket camera, and Palm V. This article highlights how they support and encourage this creative culture. Linda Tischler, "Seven Secrets to Good Brainstorming," *Fast Company*, December 19, 2007, <http://www.fastcompany.com/articles/2001/03/kelley.html> (accessed October 31, 2009).

<http://www.fastcompany.com/articles/2001/03/kelley.html>

Source: Fast Company

If you are working out of your home and you don't have a group of people with which to brainstorm, it's not a problem. Get your colleagues in other areas involved by having a brainstorming conference call. Or have a virtual brainstorming session through your professional social network by using the discussion feature on LinkedIn, getting ideas from your followers on Twitter, or creating a **wiki**⁷ where people can share ideas at any time and see the ideas that others have created.

7. A collaborative Web site that allows multiple people to share information, documents, videos, and pictures.

The bottom line is that selling is all about selling your brand (remember from [Chapter 1 "The Power to Get What You Want in Life"](#) that a brand is unique,

consistent, and relevant and has an emotional connection with its customers). When you really understand your customer and their needs and motivations, you can be extremely creative about the way you position and tell the story of your brand.

Video Clip

How Ideas Are Born

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Tim Brown, the CEO of the creative design firm Ideo, discusses how ideas are created.

Source: SocialEdge

Step 3: Identify General and Specific Benefit Statements

Once you have brainstormed a customer-specific solution, you want to find a way to showcase your solution in the best light. How will you present this idea to your prospect so that he can immediately see its relevance to his situation? How will you establish the value proposition you have to offer? How will you position your idea as a benefit to your prospect, not a self-serving sales pitch? As part of your preapproach, you should identify both a general and a specific statement to highlight the benefits of your solution or opportunity. When you deliver value to your prospect, you earn the opportunity to be a business partner, not just someone who is trying to sell something.

Imagine you work for a dairy products distributor that sells wholesale to restaurants. You've researched one of your prospects, a downtown deli, and have identified one of its major problems: the company is losing business to the sandwich place across the street. Your prospect may not yet realize the source of the trouble, but you have an idea. It seems that the prospect's competitor has cheaper sandwiches, and you know for a fact that part of the problem lies in the cost of the ingredients. Your prospect currently pays 10 percent more for the cheese it gets from its current vendor than you would charge for the same product. If the deli started buying cheese from you, it would be able to lower the cost of its sandwiches to a more competitive price and draw some of the sales that are going to its competitor. You have also brainstormed how the deli can create a "signature sandwich": a unique combination of meat and cheeses that only it offers. The sandwich provides a point of difference for the deli and a reason for previous deli customers to come back. In other words, you are helping to build your prospect's brand and business with a great idea.

This is a good solution, but you can't walk into the deli and tell your prospect, "I want to sell you some cheese." Your prospect doesn't need cheese; he needs to increase his sales, and he'll probably tell you to go away because he already has a dairy products vendor. It's your job to frame the solution in such a way that your customer can easily see its relevance to his problem; you want to answer the "What's in it for me?" question early on in the sales call. Todd Natenberg, "What's in It for the Prospect? Everything—If You Tell Them," SelfGrowth.com, <http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/Natenberg12.html> (accessed July 15, 2009). Begin by drafting a **general benefit statement**⁸, a statement that gives the big picture of how your solution will meet your prospect's need. For instance, you might say, "I have an idea for a way to increase your sandwich sales by 15 percent." Your statement showcases a solution rather than a product.

General benefit statements, as opposed to specific benefit statements, are broad enough that they would be important to most people. Philip Gerber, "The Sales Professional: Initial Benefit Statement," *Houston Business Review*, April 2005, <http://www.houstonbusiness.com/HBReview/contributors/philipgerber/gerberarchive13.html> (accessed July 15, 2009). They might address things like improving company visibility, expanding the business, increasing profits, or cutting costs. The **specific benefit statement**⁹, on the other hand, comes once you've grabbed your prospect's attention. It identifies the particular way your solution applies to your prospect, and it demonstrates that you've done your research and understand the needs that are unique to his company or situation. For instance, you might say, "Your food cost is too high, and it's keeping you from competing with other businesses. I can help you cut your food costs so that you can afford to sell your breakfast burrito for under \$2.99. Would that be something you would be interested in?" If you've done your research and brainstormed an effective solution, your benefits statements are the tools that will give you the power to convey that information clearly and effectively.

Table 8.1 Benefit Statement Examples

General Benefit Statement	Specific Benefit Statement
I have an idea that can help you lower your labor costs. Is that something you might be interested in?	If I can prove that I can help you reduce your labor costs by 10 percent, would you be willing to make a commitment?
I have some ideas about how to increase traffic to your Web site. Is that something that is of interest to you?	If I can show you how our social networking tool can drive 15 percent more traffic to your Web site during key seasonal periods, would you be willing to consider it?
I have some ideas about how to decrease your transaction time and take care of	If I can show you how our product can decrease your transaction time for each

- 8. An opening statement for a sales call that gives the big picture of how your solution meets your prospect's need.
- 9. Identifies the way a solution addresses a prospect's particular situation and needs.

General Benefit Statement	Specific Benefit Statement
more customers every hour. Is that something you are interested in?	customer by at least one minute, would you be interested in looking at the proposal?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Good salespeople don't sell products; they sell *solutions* to their customers' problems or challenges.
- Your research, including the questions you ask your customer, should help you identify needs and opportunities.
- Once you have identified your customers' problems and goals, brainstorm solutions and opportunities that will meet their needs.
- Knowing the best solution for your customer will help you craft a **general benefits statement** and a **specific benefits statement** that will help the customer envision the way your solution or opportunity meets his needs.

EXERCISES

1. Think about a local bank that offers free checking accounts. How does free checking provide a solution for a business customer? How would this solution be different for an individual customer? How do you think the personal banker changes her sales pitch based on the customer?
2. Describe a time when you made a purchase, or modified a planned purchase, because a salesperson revealed an opportunity that you wouldn't have otherwise considered.
3. Think of the last major purchase you made where you bought from a salesperson (not online). Did the salesperson adapt his or her approach to address your specific needs and concerns? If so, how?
4. Imagine that you sell Hershey's chocolate products to grocery stores. One of your prospects said that he cannot carry the complete line of Hershey's Kisses because there isn't enough shelf space in the store. Conduct a short brainstorming session to identify ten ideas that might solve this prospect's problem.
5. Assume you worked in the Apple Store. Identify one general benefit statement and one specific benefit statement for each of the following:
 - iPod
 - MacBook Pro
 - iTunes
6. Assume that due to the recession, donations to the Make-A-Wish Foundation are below expectations. The foundation's director of development has asked your class to identify ideas to increase donations in the next three months. Work in teams of two to conduct a brainstorming session using the guidelines covered in this section. Each team should present their ideas to the class.

8.3 Identify Precall Objectives: Getting Smart about Your Sales Call

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Learn how to set SMART precall objectives.

Identifying your prospect's need is only part of your preapproach research. There's still more research and planning for you to do before you meet with or speak to the customer.

Determine Your Objectives

If you haven't determined what you hope to achieve before going into your sales call, it will be difficult to figure out what to say once you arrive or once you have your prospect on the phone. Setting **precall objectives**¹⁰ is a strategically important step. If you have clear goals, you will be more confident and appear more organized, and it's more likely that you will see results. Your customers are busy people, and you don't want to waste their time. They will appreciate your organization and will be more likely to trust your judgment if you come prepared. You also don't want to waste *your* time or your company's time. According to Hoovers, the average sales call costs a company nearly \$400! Gary Duncan, "Every Sales Call Requires an Objective and Decision," *Denver Business Journal*, October 13, 2006, <http://denver.bizjournals.com/denver/stories/2006/10/16/smallb8.html> (accessed July 15, 2009).

As you plan your meeting, ask yourself this question: "What will success look like for this call?" American Institute of Public Certified Accountants, "Successful Selling Tips: The Sales Objective," <http://www.aicpa.org/Professional+Resources/CPA+Marketing+Toolkit/SellingTips6.htm> (accessed July 15, 2009). That may seem like a question with a straightforward answer, but success doesn't always mean closing the sale. In some situations, you'll experience a **one-call close**¹¹, but with larger sales, particularly in B2B sales, the **sales cycle**¹², or the length of time it takes to go from the first contact with the customer to closing the sale, is generally longer—sometimes even taking up to a year or longer. Consider Telegraph Hill Robes, a San Francisco-based company that sells bathrobes to upscale hotels with spas. Buying enough bathrobes to stock a hotel spa is a large investment, one that most customers have to carefully consider. The sale has to clear with two contacts at every company: the general manager and the head of housekeeping. As a result, when Telegraph Hill first started selling its product in 1996, its average sales cycle

10. Goals that are determined for the sales call before the call is made.
11. A sales call that results in a sale after one call.
12. The length of time it takes to go from the first contact with the customer to closing the sale.

was two years! Susan Greco, “The Need for Speed,” *Inc.*, April 2007, <http://www.inc.com/magazine/20070401/salesmarketing-smart-selling.html> (accessed July 15, 2009).

If you know that you are facing a longer sales cycle, the goal of your initial call might be gathering and conveying specific information to move forward in the sales process or further qualify your prospect. According to Gary Duncan, principal of the sales training organization Leadership Connections, “In more complex sales it’s realistic to set a precall objective of establishing rapport and trust, making new contacts in the organization, qualifying your prospect’s budget, or discovering what your prospect’s decision-making process is. For instance, you might decide you want to find out who your prospect’s current vendors are, any issues your prospect has with the services she is receiving, and what her goals are for future purchases.” Gary Duncan, “Every Sales Call Requires an Objective and Decision,” *Denver Business Journal*, October 13, 2006, <http://denver.bizjournals.com/denver/stories/2006/10/16/smallb8.html> (accessed July 15, 2009). You should also consider your prospect’s objectives: what outcome is she hoping for from this call?

Sometimes, setting strategic, information-gathering objectives may actually help you shorten your overall sales cycle. Take Acumen, a company that sells high-capability accounting software to corporations. Originally, the company’s sales cycle lasted around nine months. However, once the company became more strategic in its precall planning, designing a system of rigorous qualifying questions that its salespeople had to resolve before making a sales pitch, Acumen actually decreased its average sales cycle to somewhere between three and six months. Asking detailed questions during early sales calls allowed the company to cut back on the time it wasted brainstorming solutions and making sales pitches for underqualified leads. Susan Greco, “The Need for Speed,” *Inc.*, April 2007, <http://www.inc.com/magazine/20070401/salesmarketing-smart-selling.html> (accessed July 15, 2009).

Make Your Objectives SMART

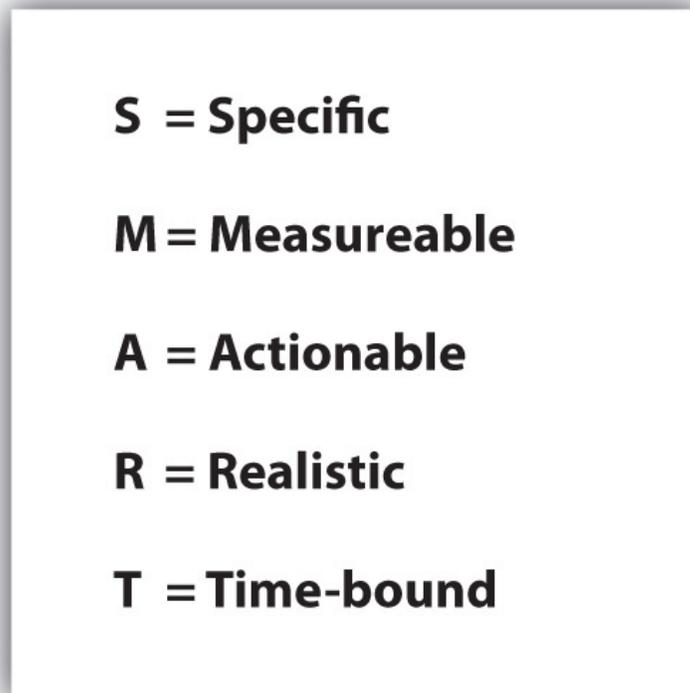
So it’s early in the process of a complex sale, and you are setting your goals for your next meeting with your customer. You know it will primarily be an information-gathering session because you need to know more before you can propose a workable, specific solution. However, if you go into the meeting with a vague plan like “I want to find out more about my prospect’s business,” you won’t accomplish much. Skills Connection, “How to Get Better Results from your Sales Meetings,” video, March 3, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1P6bU1efZbI> (accessed July 15, 2009). Instead, you might come up with a goal similar to the one mentioned earlier: “By the end of this meeting, I want to know who my prospect’s current vendors are, what issues or challenges he faces with this vendor’s services, and

what three priorities he has for future purchases.” This objective, like all effective precall objectives, is **SMART**¹³. That is, the goal is **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ctionable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-bound. Virtual Strategist, “How to Set SMART Goals,” video, M3 Planning, October 17, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uThBb3kGf4k> (accessed July 15, 2009).

- **Specific.** The goal should clearly define which actions you want your customer to take, what information you hope to convey, and/or what information you hope to learn from your sales call. In the example cited by Gary Duncan, the salesperson is setting out to gather three specific pieces of information.
- **Measurable.** You want to be able to measure the results of your efforts so that you’ll know at the end of your sales call how close you came to achieving what you set out to do. This will help you strategize about which actions to take next. The first two parts of the example are measurable with a simple yes or no (Did I find out the names of the current vendors? Did I identify issues and challenges my customer has encountered?), and the last part of the goal is quantifiable (How many of my customer’s priorities was I able to help him articulate?).
- **Actionable.** If a goal is actionable or attainable, it’s something you can actually *do*. It might involve asking questions, explaining something, or suggesting something. Whatever the case, it should be something on which you have the ability to act. In some instances, the actionable goal might be as simple as closing the sale: “By the end of the meeting, I plan to convince my prospect to sign a contract.”
- **Realistic.** If you set your goal too high or try to move your sales process along too quickly, you will only be setting yourself up for disappointment and failure. Ask yourself, “What can I reasonably hope to accomplish given the current situation with my prospect?” If you decide you want to get appointments with ten top people in the organization during your first contact with the company, or if you intend to close a major account by your first call, you will probably not be able to achieve what you set out to do.
- **Time-bound.** Not only should you know *what* you hope to achieve, but you should also know *when* you hope to have it accomplished. In the example objective, your time frame is “by the end of the sales call.” Other times, you might set a specific date—for example, “Get the prospect to agree to schedule a face-to-face meeting by the 15th.”

13. An acronym to identify the elements of a successful sales goal: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ctionable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-bound.

Figure 8.5 SMART Objectives



SMART objectives give you the power to sell strategically by setting goals you can achieve. Another powerful tool is the simple act of putting your goals down in writing. Not only are you likely to make a stronger commitment to your goals when you have them on paper, but you will also be able to use your written goals for reference later on—even during the sales call if you need to. Roy Chitwood, “Every Sales Call Must Have a Clear Objective,” *Puget Sound Business Journal*, September 26, 1997, <http://www.bizjournals.com/seattle/stories/1997/09/29/smallb3.html?page=2> (accessed July 15, 2009).

Video Clip

Setting SMART Objectives

[\(click to see video\)](#)

Watch this short video about setting SMART objectives for your sales calls.

Source: Skills Connection

Figure 8.6 Examples of SMART Objectives

SMART Objectives	Objectives that are not SMART
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete at least 25 cold calls to qualified prospects by September 1, 2010. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct as many sales calls as possible as soon as possible.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase sales of Waffle Wraps to chain grocery stores by 8% over last year by December 31, 2010. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sell as many Waffle Wraps as possible this year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convert 33% of leads to customers within 30 days of initial contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convert some leads every day so that you always have new customers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up with every prospect and customer within 48 hours of sales call. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow up with every prospect and customer after a sales call.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- It's important to know exactly what you want to accomplish when you go into a sales meeting.
- The goals for your sales call should be specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time-bound: **SMART**.
- Setting **SMART** goals will help you direct your approach, take action, and measure the results of your sales call.

EXERCISES

1. Which of the following is a SMART goal for your first sales call on a prospect to sell car insurance? Rewrite each of the other goals to be SMART.
 - Identify current insurance carrier and conduct needs analysis by Friday.
 - Call the customer and ask some questions to learn about his current situation.
 - Conduct online research about the customer and understand why he chose his current insurance carrier.
 - Call at least six new prospects by the end of the day today.
2. Imagine you sell Web site consulting services and are going into a sales call with an existing customer. You want to expand the selling relationship in two ways: by extending your contract with the customer for another two years and by getting referrals for the network support department. Identify your SMART goal for this sales call.
3. Assume you are a financial advisor and you are meeting with a prospect for the first time. Identify a SMART objective that you would set prior to your first meeting.
4. Describe the difference in the sales cycles between selling jeans to a college student compared to selling a home to a newly married couple. What impact will that have on your SMART objectives?
5. You are a sales rep for medical supplies and just took on a new prospect, Springfield Nursing Homes, a regional chain of twenty-two nursing homes. You have a contact, but you are not clear if he is a decision maker. In the past, the company has allowed each nursing home to make its own purchasing decisions, but it is moving toward a more centralized approach. This is an excellent opportunity for you to present your comprehensive product line. You are preparing for your first call, and your sales manager has asked you to review your SMART objectives for the call with him. What are your SMART objectives for the call? How you will present them to your sales manager?

8.4 Prepare Your Presentation

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Discuss key elements of presentation preparation.

Once you've done your research, brainstormed your solution, and set your SMART objectives, you've got a good foundation to move forward. The only homework left to do is planning your sales presentation. Even if you have a stellar solution to offer, and even though your objectives may be clearly defined, you can't make your sales pitch hoping to just "wing it." A well-planned presentation can often be the thing that makes or breaks a sale. If your customer sees you as well prepared (i.e., if you have thoughtfully tailored your style, presentation materials, and agenda to match what you know about your contact and his company culture), you will go far in establishing a strong rapport with your customer and earning his trust and respect.

Four Ps of Presentation Preparation

Preparing your sales presentation can seem like an overwhelming task. How long should you speak, and how much time should you allow for questions? Should you use demonstrations or examples? How formal should you be? What points should you address first? Here are four general guidelines to keep in mind as you begin the planning process.

Prioritize Your Agenda

Your presentation should be well organized. Think about how you want to lead in, when you will introduce key information in your presentation, and when you will use product demonstrations. When Tom Szaky, CEO of the garden products company TerraCycle, gives a sales presentation, he prepares by drawing up an agenda that prioritizes the information he wants to convey and arranging it in a strategic order. For example, Szaky knows that if he presents his product near the beginning of the presentation, his customers will make their buying decision before they know what makes TerraCycle unique, so he starts off all of his presentations by talking about the features that set his company apart. Stephanie Clifford, "Practice, Practice" *Inc.*, February 2007, <http://www.inc.com/magazine/20070201/features-sales-performance-szaky.html> (accessed July 15, 2009). Not only will prioritizing your agenda give you a strategic edge, but it will also help your customer to see that you are organized. Bring copies of your agenda to distribute at the beginning of the

meeting so that your customers can follow along with you as you give your presentation.

Personalize It

At this phase in the preapproach you should have some knowledge about your contacts in the company, and you should understand the company's particular culture and priorities. As you plan your presentation, you can use this knowledge to tailor your approach to your prospect. What tone will you set for the presentation? Is your prospect a "fun" company that would respond well to humor or interactive opportunities during the presentation? Are you presenting to a group of busy executives who would value an efficient, no-nonsense approach? Think about the level of formality your customers will expect. This will dictate how you dress, how you speak, and how you design your visual aids and demonstrations. When Tom Szaky gives a presentation to buyers from Wal-Mart (one of his biggest customers), he dresses casually, perhaps wearing a corduroy jacket, a John Deere cap, and frayed shoes. Stephanie Clifford, "Practice, Practice" *Inc.*, February 2007, <http://www.inc.com/magazine/20070201/features-sales-performance-szaky.html> (accessed July 15, 2009). Wal-Mart presents itself as a no-frills company, and this attitude carries over into its corporate culture. Understanding this aspect of the company and the contacts with whom he's working—representatives from the garden department—Szaky adapts his approach to match.

Figure 8.7



It's best to dress the way your customers dress for a sales call. If in doubt, always choose conservative business attire.

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Power Player: Lessons in Selling from Successful Salespeople

Do Your Homework...Even When You Know Your Customer

Cris Cavanaugh, now a CustomerCentric selling affiliate, learned the hard way that assuming in selling is not a good thing. He was asked by a customer to do a presentation at a conference. Cavanaugh accepted and gave a confident presentation. He failed miserably because the audience was not as well educated on the topic, so the audience was left confused. Cavanaugh now asks questions and gets input before every presentation because he realizes that every audience, just like every customer, is not the same. “Approach Every Presentation as If It Were Your First,” Selling Power Presentations eNewsletter, February 20, 2006, <http://www.sellingpower.com/content/newsletter/issue.php?pc=569> (accessed March 16, 2010).

Prepare Illustrations

People respond best to things they can see and experience for themselves. Your sales presentation won't be complete without product demonstrations and visual aids to inspire your customers and help them see the value of your product firsthand. As you develop this aspect of your presentation, consider slides or handouts that will reinforce key points. Consider the things that will best help this particular customer visualize your solution as a winning one. For example, in one presentation to Wal-Mart buyers, Szaky displayed a binder full of newspaper clippings in which TerraCycle had helped Wal-Mart generate positive publicity. He also used a short video and brought in a live plant grown with his potting mix. In addition, because his contact at the company had asked to see what the product might look like on the sales floor, Szaky brought in a merchandizing mockup to help his buyers visualize TerraCycle's potting mix in their stores. Stephanie Clifford, “Practice, Practice” *Inc.*, February 2007, <http://www.inc.com/magazine/20070201/features-sales-performance-szaky.html> (accessed July 15, 2009).

Practice

Finally, once you've created your presentation, practice it. Practice in front of a mirror, deliver the presentation to family members and colleagues (if you can get a willing audience!), and run over your agenda until you know it inside and out. Lahle Wolfe, "How Do You Practice Your Sales Presentation?" online discussion board, About.com, June 11, 2008, <http://sales.about.com/b/2008/06/11/how-do-you-practice-your-sales-presentation.htm#gB3> (accessed July 15, 2009). You want the presentation to come off smoothly, but you also want it to seem natural. Even experienced salespeople like Tom Szaky practice a presentation—perfecting their pacing and delivery and making sure they know their stuff—before going into a sales call. Stephanie Clifford, "Practice, Practice" Inc., February 2007, <http://www.inc.com/magazine/20070201/features-sales-performance-szaky.html> (accessed July 15, 2009).

Figure 8.8



Practice makes perfect when it comes to a presentation.

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KEY TAKEAWAY

As you plan your sales presentation, keep four things in mind:

1. Prioritize and organize your agenda.
2. Personalize the presentation to match your customer's needs and preferences.
3. Prepare visual aids and product demonstrations to illustrate your point and engage your audience.
4. Practice your delivery.

EXERCISES

1. Think of ways you might personalize a sales presentation for the following situations:
 - You are a public relations manager pitching a story about your company's new chic waterproof boots to the editorial staff of a fashion magazine.
 - You are a commercial real estate agent making a presentation to top-level managers at an accounting firm for the new location of their downtown office.
 - You are a video game developer presenting your newest game concept to a small start-up company that makes video games.
2. Assume you are the director of development for Jessica's Haven, a nonprofit organization that provides support to children with terminal illnesses and their families. You have identified Gymboree as a prospective corporate donor. Develop an agenda for a sales call to learn about how Gymboree might support Jessica's Haven and share information with the company about who the nonprofit serves and how it operates.
3. If you were the salesperson for Red Bull and you were calling on a major grocery store chain, identify three potential illustrations that you could use during your presentation.
4. Describe how your preapproach would differ (in dress, tone, conversation) for each of these situations:
 - Selling pharmaceuticals to a doctor
 - Meeting with the dairy farmers of Wisconsin to sell cheese packaging
 - Calling on a professor to sell textbooks
 - Selling computer software to a start-up liquor manufacturer

8.5 *Selling U*: Six Power-Packed Tools to Let the Right People Know about Your Brand

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

1. Learn about six different ways to get your cover letter and résumé to the right people.

Now that you understand how preparation can help you be successful in selling, let's go back to selling the most important brand of all—you! In the *Selling U* section in Chapter 7 "Prospecting and Qualifying: The Power to Identify Your Customers", you did your research, identified and qualified your twenty-five target companies, and obtained the contact information for at least two key people at each organization. Of course, there is still some homework to do before you see the payoff of securing an interview. As Andrew Sum, director of Northeastern University's Center for Labor Market Studies, says, "You're never going to find anything unless you apply." Steven Greenhouse, "Bright Spot in Downturn: New Hiring Is Robust," *New York Times*, May 5, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/06/business/economy/06hire.html> (accessed July 15, 2009). However, you can think of this step in the process as the exciting part. Consider what happens when a company releases a new product. The company doesn't keep the news to themselves, discreetly shipping the product out to stores with the hopes that the right buyers will just happen to find it. Instead, it leverages every resource it has to get the word out. Think about the new Prius. Toyota took advantage of publicity surrounding the car's fuel efficiency to generate buzz with newspapers, radio, and television reporting on Prius-related press releases. Toyota leveraged Web resources (e.g., blogs, discussion forums, product fan sites) and highlighted positive product reviews in its press releases and online. "Toyota Promotes Prius Buzz with New Forum," *Company Car Driver*, June 16, 2009, http://www.companycardriver.co.uk/news/article/?art_ID=315742919 (accessed July 15, 2009).

When a company has designed a new product or brand, it is excited to let people know about it. The more enthusiastically it shares the news, the better the payoff. The same should be true of your job search. *You* are a new brand that is about to go on the market, you know you have unique qualities to offer, and you should be excited to let other people know this about you, too. Sending the news to potential employers at your target companies is a good way to start. If you take advantage of

this tool, in combination with five other power-packed tools for getting the word out, you will be surprised by the positive results you see.

Power-Packed Tool #1: Professional Social Networking

You learned about the power of networking, and especially professional social networking, in [Chapter 3 "The Power of Building Relationships: Putting Adaptive Selling to Work"](#). More and more companies are turning to professional social networks such as LinkedIn to identify potential candidates for jobs. But it's not enough to simply create a profile on LinkedIn. To be noticed on a massive professional networking site, just as in the real world, you have to stand out. That means completing your profile, adding content, participating in discussions, and linking to other content, such as your blog. Also, share your content by joining groups on LinkedIn, such as *The Power of Selling* (a group of selling professionals to support you in this class and beyond), Sales and Marketing Executives, and Salesblogcast.com, or other groups in your area of interest. These groups include thousands of professionals with whom you can connect and network. And ask people such as supervisors from your job, internship, or volunteer organization; professors; or other professionals to speak on your behalf by posting a recommendation about you.

Link

Powerful Profile

Meet Mig Pascual on LinkedIn by clicking on his profile using the link below. Mig uses content to build his personal brand by providing complete experience, including topical videos, slide shows, and book recommendations to demonstrate his skills. In addition, he has several recommendations from supervisors and colleagues. This powerful profile works—just take a look at the number of connections Mig has in his network. You can connect with Mig and ask him to join your network by clicking on “View Full Profile” (you will need to create a profile before you can ask Mig to join your network).

<http://www.linkedin.com/in/migpascual>

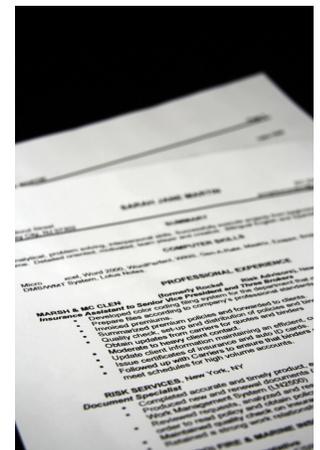
Power-Packed Tool #2: Direct Mail

Direct mail is a powerful but often overlooked source you have for getting your cover letter and résumé to people who are making hiring decisions. Now that you've done your research and identified your twenty-five target companies and key decision makers at each one, it's time to put that information to work.

You might think that sending letters to companies that don't currently have open jobs posted might be a waste of time. The fact is that hiring managers don't like to post jobs, as it takes time and energy to come up with the job description, clear it through all the proper channels, sort through résumés and cover letters, and interview potential employees. This means that a number of your contacts may have open positions they haven't yet publicized, and they would be delighted if a qualified candidate like you could save them the hassle of a drawn out hiring process. And if you've done everything correctly (e.g., addressed your cover letter individually to key hiring managers, not just human resources), but your letter doesn't end up in the right person's hands, your contact at the company may very well pass your résumé on to someone else who would be a better fit. ("Hey Dave, is your department still looking for a marketing assistant?") If you want your letter to stand out even more, consider sending it to some top prospective employers with a return receipt requested or via FedEx. It's a good way to ensure that the recipient received your cover letter and résumé and there's a good chance your letter will get opened quickly.

Sending your cover letter and résumé to several people at your twenty-five target companies will set you apart from your competitors because very few people send information by mail these days. Think about the number of e-mails you get in your in-box daily. A letter stands out, and the best part about sending direct mail to your target companies is that it's easy to do. You can use the spreadsheet you created in [Chapter 7 "Prospecting and Qualifying: The Power to Identify Your Customers"](#) to easily personalize cover letters and envelopes to the people at your target companies by using the **mail merge feature**. Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 142. Watch the video below to see how it's done. Keep in mind that hiring managers are busy people, and sometimes letters get lost or forgotten. If you don't get the response you were hoping for, send your letter to the same people in your mail merge again in three to four weeks. Kim Richmond, "10 Ways to Get the Word Out about Your

Figure 8.9



Brand,” presentation in the How to Market Yourself as a Brand to Get the Job You Want Workshop Series, Upper Merion Township Library, King of Prussia, PA, June 1, 2009.

Sending your résumé and cover letter via direct mail helps you stand out and get the word out about your brand.

Video Clip

© 2010 Jupiterimages Corporation

How to Do a Mail Merge

[\(click to see video\)](#)

You can personalize hundreds of cover letters in just minutes using the Mail Merge feature in Word (Microsoft or Mac). Watch this video to see how easy it is to do.

Power-Packed Tool #3: Company Web Sites

During the preapproach to a sales call, a good salesperson spends time at her prospective company’s Web site, researching the organization and its key people in greater depth so that she can go into the meeting knowledgeable about basic company facts and informed of any recent developments. This is also an important technique when researching prospective employers—and it’s a task that requires minimal effort on your part. If one of your target companies contacts you for an interview, the knowledge you gained from this Web site research will prove useful.

The online job boards for your twenty-five target companies are another avenue for getting the word out about your brand. It doesn’t hurt to apply for published positions, particularly if you take steps (using techniques described here and in other chapters) to set yourself apart from the majority of other applicants. If the Web site gives you the option, sign up for e-mail alerts that will let you know when new positions open up. Company Web sites are excellent resources for finding advertised positions because the job descriptions posted there are often more detailed than the descriptions you might be able to find through general online job boards. LT International, “Job Searching: The Importance of Examining Company Websites,” BNET, January 2008, <http://jobfunctions.bnet.com/abstract.aspx?docid=915723> (accessed July 15, 2009). Moreover, many companies post open positions only on their Web sites to avoid the cost of posting on other job boards.

Power-Packed Tool #4: Online Job Boards

The benefit of online job boards like Monster.com, CareerBuilder.com, and Yahoo! HotJobs is that they make it a snap to perform searches by industry and keyword,

and they often return a wealth of results. In fact, Internet job boards have recently become one of the fastest growing online categories. Sarah Radwanick, “Job Search Ranks as Fastest Growing U.S. Online Category in 2008,” *Reuters*, January 22, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS243039+22-Jan-2009+PRN20090122> (accessed July 15, 2009). These sites can be an excellent avenue for learning about career opportunities in your target industry, and they should be an ongoing part of your efforts to find the right employer. Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 133. These sites might help you find job opportunities through companies that you wouldn’t have otherwise considered working for, and they will certainly keep you informed about the kinds of positions for which people are currently hiring in your industry and the particular qualifications for which many employers are searching.

Most sites will allow you to set up e-mail alerts (customized by your chosen keywords) so that new job postings come to your in-box regularly. It’s best to enter as many keywords as you can think of that are relevant to your interests and experiences so that you don’t miss anything. For instance, if you want a job in advertising, you would choose *advertising* as a keyword, but you could also list words like *promotions*, *account executive*, *account manager*, *account coordinator*, *customer services*, *brand manager*, *advertising agency*, and *social media*. Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 139. You might also consider creating a separate e-mail account to keep track of your job-related e-mails, particularly if you have subscribed to alerts through several job search Web sites. In fact, it’s a good idea to go through a number of Web sites so that you can stay informed about as many opportunities as possible. You can go through general job boards like Vault.com or CareerBuilder.com, industry-specific job boards like MarketingSherpa.com, location-specific job boards like SeattleRecruiter.com, or a combination of these options.

Table 8.2 Online Job Boards

General	
CollegeGrad.com http://collegegrad.com	Career information and job board directed at college students
Vault.com	Job board, internship opportunities, and information on career planning

http://vault.com/wps/portal/usa	
<p>Experience</p> <p>http://www.experience.com</p>	Job board, articles, and career planning advice
<p>CareerBuilder.com</p> <p>http://careerbuilder.com/</p>	One of the largest job boards on the Internet; includes career planning articles
<p>WetFeet</p> <p>http://wetfeet.com</p>	Job board and career planning information
<p>Craigslist</p> <p>http://www.craigslist.org/about/sites</p>	Location-specific job boards
<p>Yahoo! HotJobs</p> <p>http://hotjobs.yahoo.com</p>	Large job board with articles on job searching
<p>Riley Guide</p> <p>http://rileyguide.com/</p>	Job board and career planning information and resources
Industry Specific	

<p>Association Job Boards</p> <p>http://www.associationjobboards.org/find.cfm</p>	<p>Includes links to Web sites of professional associations and job boards</p>
<p>SMEI</p> <p>http://smei.associationcareernetwork.com/Common/HomePage.aspx</p>	<p>Job board for sales and marketing executives</p>
<p>Accounting Jobs Today</p> <p>http://www.accountingjobstoday.com</p>	<p>Job board for careers in <i>accounting</i> and <i>finance</i></p>
<p>Jobs in the Money</p> <p>http://www.jobsinthemoney.com</p>	<p>Job board for <i>accounting</i> and <i>finance</i></p>
<p>Accounting.com</p> <p>http://www.accounting.com</p>	<p>Job board for <i>accounting</i> positions</p>
<p>Sologig.com</p> <p>http://www.sologig.com</p>	<p>Job board for <i>freelancing</i>, <i>contracting</i>, <i>consulting</i>, and <i>temporary</i> work</p>
<p>MarketingSherpa.com</p>	<p>Job board for <i>marketing</i>; includes articles</p>

http://www.marketingsherpa.com	
Marketinjobs.com http://www.marketinjobs.com	Job board for <i>marketing</i>
TalentZoo.com http://www.talentzoo.com	Job board for <i>marketing, advertising, and PR</i>
Stylecareers.com http://www.stylecareers.com	Job board for <i>fashion, apparel, and retail</i>
Mediabistro.com http://www.mediabistro.com	Job board for <i>marketing</i>

Source: Adapted from Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 221–23.

Although it's important to use direct mail when submitting a cold-contact application, when you apply for positions you find on online job boards, you should apply through the Web site using the format they prescribe. Just make sure you include a cover letter when you submit your résumé. Hiring managers are likely to throw away résumés that come in without cover letters because a cover letter is what allows you to personalize your application, sending the message that you care enough to make an effort in your job search. Finally, keep in mind that while many job seekers rely entirely on online job boards for their searches, and while these sites can be a good avenue for learning about opportunities, they are not an end-all

method. They are strongest when used in combination with your direct-mail campaign and the other power-packed tools mentioned in this chapter.

Power-Packed Tool #5: Get Out There

Finally, when you want to let people know you are on the market and have unique skills to offer, consider integrating a number of methods discussed in other chapters of this book to let people see your face. Phone calls, letters, and online communications are critical to your job search, but nothing creates an impression and establishes personal connections like face-to-face interaction.

- **Informational interviews.** (See the *Selling U* section in [Chapter 5 "The Power of Effective Communication"](#).) Develop a list of contacts that work in your field of interest and get in touch with several of them to ask about setting up an informational interview: “You do what I would like to do. Could I come in and learn about how you got into the industry?” People naturally love sharing their knowledge and expertise, so most of your contacts will be more than willing to help. “Informational Interviewing Tutorial: Learn about How an Informational Interview Should Be an Integral Part of Your Networking and Job-Hunting Plan,” Quintessential Careers, http://www.quintcareers.com/informational_interviewing.html (accessed July 15, 2009). Informational interviews are excellent resources for establishing connections and generating job leads.
- **Mentors.** You are never too young nor too old to have a mentor. Mentors can help you develop your knowledge and skills, build your network, and learn inside information about working in your chosen field. Kim Richmond, “10 Ways to Get the Word Out about Your Brand,” presentation in the How to Market Yourself as a Brand to Get the Job You Want Workshop Series, Upper Merion Township Library, King of Prussia, PA, June 1, 2009. Mentors are your allies: the people who most want to see you succeed—and the ones who often have the resources to help you do so.
- **Networking.** (See the *Selling U* section in [Chapter 3 "The Power of Building Relationships: Putting Adaptive Selling to Work"](#).) It’s impossible to overstate the importance of building your network. Online tools like LinkedIn are powerful resources, but face-to-face networking with personal and professional connections alike can generate surprising results. Who knows, your stylist might tell you, “Oh yeah, my brother-in-law is in sales. You might want to talk to him about a job. I’m not sure if he has any jobs open, but I’ll give you his number so you can touch base with him.”

- **Internships and professional organizations.** (See the *Selling U* section in [Chapter 14 "The Power of Learning the Ropes"](#).) Internships are an excellent way to network, learn more about working in your chosen field, gain valuable experience, and sometimes get your foot in the door at a company. Another way to get exposure in any industry is by joining and getting involved in professional organizations. In [Chapter 14 "The Power of Learning the Ropes"](#), you will learn more about the value of applying for internships and joining professional organizations.

Power-Packed Tool #6: Follow-Up

Following up helps you maximize your efforts after networking, applying for an online job, sending direct mail, contacting someone via networking (online or offline), and visiting a job fair. You will leave a good impression, help your contacts to remember you, and set yourself apart from other applicants. Follow-up can sometimes have surprising benefits, so even when a door seems closed, make the effort to send a personal note or thank-you. Consider a college graduate who integrated follow-up into her job search. Shortly after applying for a public relations position at one of her target companies, she received a letter saying the position had been filled. Anika followed up on this letter with a note, thanking the interviewer for her time and mentioning how much she had enjoyed their meeting and her visit to the company. A week later, she got the position—the candidate the company originally hired had changed her mind. Because she was the only applicant who had followed up, she stood out, and the company hired her as a replacement.

Consider these techniques that will allow you to make the most of your follow-up efforts:

- **Send thank-you notes.** Send a personal thank-you note to everyone in your online network who gives you a referral and to anyone with whom you have an informational interview. Allison Doyle, “Informational Interview: What Is an Informational Interview and How It Can Help Your Career,” About.com, <http://jobsearch.about.com/cs/infointerviews/a/infointerview.htm> (accessed July 15, 2009). Also, send a thank-you note or e-mail to contacts you meet at career fairs. It’s best to send a thank-you e-mail the same day, then follow up with a handwritten note. When you write your handwritten note and mail it the day of your meeting or interview, your contact will usually receive it the next day. And do it in a timely manner. Don’t let weeks go by—send your notes within a day so that they arrive while you are still fresh in your contact’s mind.

- **Call.** Call your twenty-five target companies one week after you mail out your cover letter and résumé. If you are sending your direct mailings to at least two contacts at each company, it won't be realistic to follow up with *everyone*. Pick the key contact at your target company—usually the hiring manager in your targeted department—with whom you want to follow up and make sure you actually get her on the phone when you call. If the call goes to voice mail, you can leave a message, but try back again until you reach her.

It's also important to keep thorough records of your communications with your target companies and contacts. Use the Excel spreadsheet you created for your mailing list to record the date you mailed your cover letters and résumés, the date you followed up, the result of your follow-up, and any future actions you need to take (e.g., call back in one week). You can use a similar system when you follow up with your online job board applications. Postings listed on online job boards don't always provide the contact info for individuals at the company, but whenever they do, make sure you follow up with this person by phone one week after you have submitted your résumé and cover letter. Kim Richmond, *Brand You*, 3rd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008), 145.

Follow-up is an opportunity to take advantage of the research you've been doing and any information you've gathered from tracking a company's RSS feeds or Google News Alerts. For instance, say you want to work in the entertainment industry and you're following up with a hiring manager at Epic Records. You've found out through the company's RSS feed that they've recently released an online collection of bonus tracks, live recordings, and previously unreleased songs by the group Incubus, "Epic Records to Release The Vault—A Comprehensive Look and Listen inside Incubus," *Reuters*, June 2, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/pressRelease/idUS154717+02-Jun-2009+BW20090602> (accessed July 15, 2009). so you mention this to the hiring manager when you follow up about your application. This lets the hiring manager know that you've done your research and are genuinely interested in the company, which helps establish a rapport.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- You will never see the payoff from your potential employer research unless you get the word out. Let people know you are on the market for a job.
- The most important step to ensure your résumé reaches decision makers is direct mailing your cover letter and résumé to contacts at each of your twenty-five target companies—a task you can accomplish easily with a **mail merge**.
- Keep an eye on the Web sites of your twenty-five target companies to find out about new job postings and stay updated on developments at each company.
- Online job boards will let you find out about new advertised positions daily and can help you identify opportunities you might not have otherwise considered.
- Use networking sites like LinkedIn to make new contacts and connect with people in your industry.
- Follow up—after sending a direct mailing, after meeting someone at a career fair, and so on—to strengthen relationships with people that can help you find a job.
- Leverage techniques mentioned in other chapters—informational interviews, mentoring relationships, networking, internships, and professional organization memberships—to help get the word out about your brand.

EXERCISES

1. Visit the Web sites of five of the companies on your target twenty-five list. Sign up for a job agent and complete a profile, if those are options on each Web site.
2. Visit three online job boards. Sign up for a job agent and complete a profile, if those are options offered on the sites.
3. Identify at least one person with whom you can meet for an informational interview. Contact the person and meet with him to learn about how he got into the business and ask him for additional contacts with whom you can network.
4. Identify at least two professional organizations that may be of interest to you. Visit the Web sites to see their upcoming events and plan to attend a meeting or event for each one. Explore membership information and learn about the benefits and cost of membership. Join each organization's group on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to keep up-to-date on events and discussions.

8.6 Review and Practice

Power Wrap-Up

Now that you have read this chapter, you should be able to understand the preapproach in selling.

- You can **describe** the role of key and target accounts.
- You can **complete** a precall planning worksheet.
- You can **list** resources to use to conduct preapproach research about prospects.
- You can **identify** needs and opportunities of prospects.
- You can **generate** ideas for your prospects in an effective brainstorming session.
- You **create** general and specific benefit statements.
- You can **determine** SMART precall objectives.
- You can **explore** six different ways to get your cover letter and résumé to the right people.

TEST YOUR POWER KNOWLEDGE (ANSWERS ARE BELOW)

1. What is the difference between a key account and a target account?
2. Why is a precall planning worksheet completed?
3. Why are customer demographics important in B2B selling?
4. What is the best source of prospects?
5. What is the role of trade journals in researching your prospects?
6. What are some important pieces of information you should learn when you are researching a prospect?
7. List and explain at least three sources of information you would use when researching your prospect.
8. Should you filter your ideas during the brainstorming process? Why or why not?
9. Name two techniques of effective brainstorming.
10. Create a general benefit statement to use if you were selling Starbucks coffee to your friend.
11. What do the letters SMART stand for?
12. Write a SMART objective for your first meeting with a prospect during which you want to learn who is the decision maker.
13. Name at least one thing you should do to prepare for your presentation to a prospect.
14. Name at least three ways to get your cover letter and résumé to the right people.

POWER (ROLE) PLAY

Now it's time to put what you've learned into practice. Following are two roles that are involved in the same selling situation; one role is that of the sales manager and the other is that of the salesperson. This will give you the opportunity to think about this selling situation from the point of view of both the sales manager and the salesperson.

Read each role carefully along with the discussion questions. Then, be prepared to play either of the roles in class using the concepts covered in this chapter. You may be asked to discuss the roles and role-play in groups or individually.

Green and Bright

Role: Sales Manager for GreenWay Lighting Company

You are the sales manager for GreenWay Lighting. Your product, LED lighting, can save companies up to 30 percent on their lighting bills starting in the first year after purchase. Target customers are industrial companies, such as manufacturers, that have large facilities. One of your sales reps would like to have a brainstorming session with you, the marketing director, product manager, and several other sales reps before approaching a new prospect, JR Papermills. Before the brainstorming session, you meet with the sales rep to discuss the following:

- What information has the sales rep gathered about JR Papermills, and why is the company a good prospect?
- What information has the sales rep gathered about the person with whom he is meeting at JR Papermills?
- What are the SMART objectives that the sales rep has developed for the first sales call?

Role: GreenWay Lighting Sales Rep

Your company markets and sells energy-efficient LED lighting to businesses and other facilities. You have qualified JR Papermills as a prospect due to the size of the facility (500,000 square feet), number of lights (one million), and plans for expansion (new manufacturing plant planned to be operational by the end of next year). You've done your homework about the company, and you learned that they always like to invest in products that give them a return in the first year after purchase. You want to set up a brainstorming

session with several people in the company to help develop ideas you can use when you approach this prospect.

- How will you convince your sales manager that JR Papermills is a promising prospect that is worth taking the time for a brainstorming session?
- If you want to gather more information about the prospect, where would you go to learn more about the company? Where would you go to learn more about the person with whom you are going to meet?
- How would you use your preapproach research to structure a brainstorming session?

PUT YOUR POWER TO WORK: *SELLING U* ACTIVITIES

1. Join at least three new groups on LinkedIn (you should have already set up your profile). Then, add at least three additional people to your network every week based on discussions that take place in the groups. Participate in discussions and keep in touch with the new people in your network.
2. Use the list of twenty-five target companies you developed in [Chapter 7 "Prospecting and Qualifying: The Power to Identify Your Customers"](#) and do a test mail merge to see how it works.

TEST YOUR POWER KNOWLEDGE ANSWERS

1. Target account is a new, qualified prospect. Key account is an existing customer that is or has the potential to be a significant source of sales.
2. It is an organized way to research and learn about your qualified prospect. It is the information gathered here that helps you plan your approach and presentation and the questions you want to explore.
3. B2B selling requires understanding your prospect as well as their customers, which usually include the end user.
4. Existing customers.
5. Trade journals can give you insights about trends in the industry, your prospect's company, and even the prospect himself.
6. About the company: demographics, financial performance, company news; about the company's customers: demographics, size of customer base, what customers are saying about the prospect; about the current buying situation: type of purchase, competitors and current provider, current pricing; about the contact person: title and role in the company, professional background, personal information, essential problem your contact needs to solve, prospect's motivation for buying,
7. Online databases (e.g., Hoovers), business directories (e.g., Bizjournals.com), trade journals, company Web site, LinkedIn, blogs, social networks, company employees, complementary and competitive salespeople.
8. During brainstorming, it's best not to filter ideas in order to generate as many ideas as possible. Then, the ideas should be prioritized and modified in order to be implemented.
9. Know your problem or opportunity; generate, don't evaluate; push beyond the wall; use strategic stimuli.
10. I have an idea that will refresh your mind and give you a different environment to work in. Does that sound like something you would be interested in?
11. Specific, measurable, actionable (or achievable), realistic, time-bound
12. Learn who is the decision maker and who are influencers for the buying decision at this account by the end of the first sales call.
13. Prioritize the agenda, personalize the presentation, prepare illustrations, and practice.
14. Professional social networking, direct mail, company Web sites, online job boards, follow-up, and getting out there (networking, informational interviews, professional organizations, internships).