

by Bill Gallagher Ph. D.

Selling is the profession with perhaps the smarmiest reputation. Folks who are primarily in sales rarely have the word "sales" on their stationary and business cards. I've seen everything from "Account Representative" to "Special Agent." Like they were the FBI, or something. Anything but Salesperson. Why? Probably because we don't **always** act like professionals. Okay, so what do professionals do? How do they act?

Think about it for a minute. Picture a professional in your mind. What is he or she doing? Now picture in your mind a salesperson. What do you picture them doing? Most of us see the professional, whether doctor, lawyer, architect, or pastor, as sitting across from us listening. And, we see the salesperson talking!

Ta da! Very important distinction. Professionals listen and sales people talk. Most of us got into sales because we were good talkers. My mother-in-law calls it "the gift of gab." We good-talkers were told something like, "Bill, you're a good talker. You ought to be in sales." So we got into sales. And there, if we survived, we discovered that we only succeeded to the extent that we became good, may I say, professional listeners.

The key to listening professionally, is to make sure that we're only talking 20% of the time and listening 80% of the time. This is the correct ratio. And it's very difficult to do. **The secret lies in asking a lot of questions.**

It's the only way to throttle the "gift of gab."

Asking alot of questions is one way to stay listening but what you say the rest of the time and the way you say it can also have help to keep someone talking. Here then is how a Guerrilla HITS their prospects with *Body HITS* and *Verbal HITS*:

### Body HITS

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These are things you can do with your posture and your voice to encourage your customers to keep talking and demonstrate that you really are listening to them.

You ask a content question, they usually begin with "wh." Your customer begins to answer. You do the following; notice that they begin with the letters **H,I,T**, and **S**:

**H**ead nods and then slightly tilts, indicating interest.

**I**nch forward and sit on the last 3 or 4 inches of your chair.

**T**ake written notes. Write down the date, time, and place of the meeting, who was there, and what was said. These notes are evidence of what was agreed to. Subconsciously, they form a kind of understanding or quasi-contract between you and the prospect.

**S**quare up in your chair with the prospect. This posture encourages further conversation and indicates interest. Squared up means eyes parallel, shoulders parallel, and knees parallel. These points form squares or rectangles between you and your customer. Should a customer turn a bit away, you pause a second or so and reposition yourself to maintain the square.

### **Verbal HITS**

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Let's look now at things that you can say to encourage customers to keep talking. Remember the longer the customer talks the more likely you are to hear true wants, needs, and expectations from your client.

You ask a content question, they usually begin with "wh." Your customer begins to answer.

You say the following, (notice that they begin with the letters H,I,T, and S):

**H**mmmmm." I know that you probably won't find this word in your dictionary, but it's a honey and it's very powerful. You can even say it while the other person is talking, without interrupting! It's close cousin is another sort-of English phrase, usually spelled "Uh **H**uh." What do these mean? They are both indications that you're interested and that you'd like to hear more.

**I**nteresting." This is the second thing you say. You can also add to it with something like, "That's really interesting." By the way, when you say that you find something "interesting," you really aren't saying much. You haven't said that you agree or disagree. You've only said that you are far from bored, in fact, you're interested! Ta Da!

**T**ell me more." This is the third thing you say. Make sure it is a sincere request for more information. Maybe you'd prefer to say it like this, "Wow! Can you tell me more about that?"

**S**o, how did that feel?" This is the fourth thing that you say. "So" is a summary word. It represents all that you've said up till now, You can only say this sentence if you've heard something where there could be some feeling, pain, or concern. In many cases, after asking this question, you will not get a genuine feeling. That's okay.

Feelings are tough to report, but if you do get a genuine feeling, congratulations! Even though you haven't done any "selling" yet, you've probably got the sale. People feel really good about reporting their feelings, and they feel trust for, and confidence in, people to whom they report their true feelings.

After you've listened to the answer about feelings you can begin the cycle over again. In other words, the next thing you say again is, "Hmmmmm." This is followed by, "Interesting." "Tell me more." and "So, how did that feel?" in that order until you're sure you've heard a complete answer to your original question.

In conclusion, learning to listen 80% of the time and talk only 20% is very tough for many

salespeople. By asking a lot of questions you'll be listening to the answers more. Learn to take written notes and ask for more information.