Cold calling is really a numbers game.

This e-book shares how and why you should pitch different points of entry in your sales process. Learn why to try that door, and what might be behind it. No conversation is ever a waste of time, and a successful pitch will always get you one step closer to the sale.

Managed Sales Pros

Now you're talking.

PITCHING THE RECEPTIONIST

Why and how you should pitch the first point of contact within an SMB company.

Pitching the Receptionist in the 10-20 user space

The best reason I can think of for pitching the receptionist at a company of this size is the fact that they may very well be married, related to or deeply imbedded in the business. When you started your IT company, who did you recruit first? Family and friends. My sister is my business partner. My daughter is an intern here. My mom runs our Boston office. One of my best friends is our accountant. Never try to lie or bully your way past the gatekeeper (or anyone else). Even if the owner can see value in what you are bringing to the table, he'll think twice about doing business with someone who treated his staff poorly – whether they are family, or just part of his or her 'business family'. Conversely, the excited voice of that team member discussing the amazing solution you provide and how it will benefit the company can bring some weight to a decision that someone is on the fence about.

Reason Two. The person you think is the receptionist may not be 'just' the receptionist. Many small businesses are using IVR systems that 'hunt' for the first available representative – the person who greets you may be the receptionist, but I own a 20+ person company and I still answer our phone all the time. It could be a client, it could be a potential client, and I want them reaching someone immediately whenever possible. The person you think is the receptionist may be the owner. Pitch anyone who answers the phone.

Reason Three? Nobody is 'just' anything anymore in small businesses. Your first point of contact may have multiple roles within the organization. And remember, if you can't effectively pitch the receptionist, you may never get through to anyone else there.

Engage the receptionist from the minute they pick up the phone. Brevity is your friend. Here are a few suggestions:

"Who do you call when there is an issue with your computer network? I'd like to be that phone call. How do I make that happen?"

"We provide computer support. I'd like to provide you with a complimentary assessment and quote. Who should I talk to?"

"We help companies decide if they should be using cloud based solutions to support their business processes, what is the best way to get 20 minutes with your executive team?"

#CCTOTD: Try asking "How does that sound to you?" in place of "Is that something that would be of interest to you?"

"I'd like to come in on Tuesday the 20th or Friday the 23rd with coffee and donuts and tell you and your team about why we think we can provide you with the best IT support in Atlanta.   How do I get that set up?"

Notice that all questions are open-ended.   They are questions that require an answer that isn't simply "Yes", or "No".

Getting the receptionist involved in the process greatly reduces the chances that he or she will simply say *"We're not interested"* and hang up on you. Try it.

Pitching the Receptionist in the 20-50 user space

The quick pitch and questions you will use do not differ much at this level, but as you pitch larger businesses, the receptionist often gets further removed from the executive team, unless he or she is also admin support for the executive.

Roles are more clearly defined within larger SMBs. You can begin to ask for position titles at this level. So instead of asking the receptionist who you should talk to, you can suggest who you might like to speak with.

It is okay to just ask for the name of the contact, if you have it. We find nine times out of ten the gatekeeper will ask *"May I tell him what it is regarding?",* in which case you have to launch in to why you are calling anyhow, so better to just get it out of the way yourself.

"It's Joe calling from ABC IT.   We provide companies in Atlanta with guidance on which cloud solutions they could be using to (increase productivity/decrease overhead/support or replace their current IT infrastructure). We find that we are easily able to save (law firms/consulting groups/medical clinics/grow ops/whatever) about 30% in hardware costs in the first year alone. Usually we speak with the President or the Controller and then come in to provide a complimentary assessment – who would you suggest I try first there?"

Here you will show niche expertise – you work with companies like theirs all time. You will show enormous value in a quantifiable way – numbers that you can back up. You will point them towards who you want to reach, but let them choose who you speak to and ask them to participate in the process.

In our experience, the more you interact with the gatekeeper, the more likely it will be that you will get an audience with the person you want to speak with.

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If you are shut down at this point in the process by a "*We're not interested, thanks",* you can ask permission to email him or her information about your services, and ask them to do you the favour of reviewing the information and passing it on to their team if they see value in it. Send information and follow up with them as if they were the decision maker.

If you are shut down by a *"We're happy with what we have, thanks"*, you can try our favourite approach, which is this: *"I was happy with my Ford Focus until I test drove a Lexus. The absolute worst time to have to negotiate with a new service provider is when your house is on fire. This is especially true for IT – you lose your ability to negotiate when you're dealing with a critical issue and need support yesterday. It never hurts to have a relationship with another provider you can call on if there is an emergency. How can we present our services to your team?"*

If you aren't put through, again you should ask for their contact information and send information and follow up as if they were the decision maker. If you really want to stand out from the crowd, Starbucks allows you to send a coffee by email – send them a coffee, with a note saying you hope they'll take a minute to enjoy the coffee while they review your materials. Then send your stuff along. If you ever drop by their office unannounced because "you were in the area", they'll remember the person that sent them the coffee and may take a few minutes to chat, and better yet, allow you to chat with anyone else you'd like if they can arrange it.

#CCTOTD: Try asking "How does that sound to you?" in place of "Is that something that would be of interest to you?"

PITCHING THE OFFICE MANAGER

Those of you who think an office manager doesn't have decision making authority either don't have an office manager, or aren't using your office manager's time correctly. I pulled this office manager job description off of a job board:

An office manager role usually consists of the following tasks:

- *using a range of office software, including email, spreadsheets and databases;*
- *managing filing systems;*
- *depending on the organisation, duties of the role may extend to the management of social media;*
- *developing and implementing new administrative systems, such as record management;*
- *recording office expenditure and managing the budget;*
- *organising the office layout and maintaining supplies of stationery and equipment;*
- *maintaining the condition of the office and arranging for necessary repairs;*
- *organising and chairing meetings with your staff - in lower paid roles this may include typing the agenda and taking minutes, but senior managers usually have an administrative assistant to do this;*
- *overseeing the recruitment of new staff, sometimes including training and induction;*
- *ensuring adequate staff levels to cover for absences and peaks in workload, often by using temping agencies;*
- *carrying out staff appraisals, managing performance and disciplining staff;*
- *delegating work to staff and managing their workload and output;*
- *promoting staff development and training;*
- *implementing and promoting equality and diversity policy;*
- *writing reports for senior management and delivering presentations;*
- *responding to customer enquiries and complaints;*
- *reviewing and updating health and safety policies and ensuring they are observed;*
- *arranging regular testing for electrical equipment and safety devices;*
- *attending conferences and training.*

Assuming an office manager at any size company does even half of these items, you can't tell me for a minute that their opinion doesn't hold weight with the office. The office manager, more than anyone else in that organization of that size, will have day to day contact with most of the other "decision makers" in the company, and will have the most accurate overview of how one change might affect all other moving parts in the company.

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Many office managers are frustrated about the percentage of their time that they feel is "wasted" on a day to day basis. Your goal when pitching the office manager on managed services will be demonstrating first how it's going to change their week personally – freeing up time for them to do things that "really matter" to them, and to their company. The office manager, more than most people in the company, will understand what areas of the company are "broken", and IT is no exception.

The office manager will likely be the point of contact in a first point of contact IT contract, or the person who gets the call when something breaks. They may even be the person who troubleshoots basic issues prior to contacting the break/fix service provider. And if a company has an in-house IT department, the office manager will know how effective they are, or are not. They are definitely the person who sets up new employees, and the person who requisitions any new hardware or software licenses.

Our strategy for pitching the office manager is simple. There is no different pitch for the under or over 20 seat space – either a company is large enough to have an office manager, or they aren't.

First, tell them who you are and then ask a very open ended discussion question.

"It's Joe from ABC computers in Atlanta. We work with (types of companies) in the Atlanta area to help them streamline their business processes using technology. I'd like to take a few minutes to chat about anything you find especially frustrating, to see if we can suggest something that we might be able to easily improve using the right technology. What's the first thing that comes to mind?"

Responses here will range widely.

If they immediately identify an area that is frustrating them, you should tailor your initial response to a solution to that problem – ideally one that doesn't require a whole lot of moving parts – and ask for a meeting to further discuss that solution. You'll have the opportunity to pitch managed services at the meeting, but your foot in the door should be a suggestion with a moderate price tag attached and an easier implementation. You can ask at this juncture who else would participate in that discussion so you can send them an outlook invite, but make sure you don't ask that question in a way that indicates you think they don't have the authority to make the decision. Not knowing the personality at play, that could very well shut down any chance you had of getting in the door.

If their response is a very defensive "*Everything is fine",* this is probably not a great time to pitch this person. Ask if you can send them some information about a few different services and some case studies for other companies you work with, and then ask permission to call them again in a few weeks.

#CCTOTD: Try asking "How does that sound to you?" in place of "Is that something that would be of interest to you?"

If they are amenable to receiving the information and a call back, attempt to get a calendared meeting with them in two weeks time. Sometimes the "*Everything is fine*" objection means "*I'm having a lousy day*" and sometimes it can mean "*I don't have time for this right now*". Honestly, with a vague all-solutions conversation opener like the one we have introduced here, the "*everything is fine*" objection holds no real water at all – it's a catch-all blow-off. If they don't keep the meeting, or won't take your follow-up calls, you can simply add them to a drip campaign and move on to the next contact.

If the response is a thoughtful *"I'm not sure*" or something similar, this is a great time to suggest some of the things that other clients have achieved after implementing managed services. The more case studies that you can lead people towards the better. You also have the chance now to ask for a longer meeting to go through a needs assessment with this contact to identify ways you could help them. So as opposed to the "pitch one idea when they have one clearly identified pain point" approach, this approach assumes that you're going to help them find the pain, and then propose a few ways that you will make it go away. You become the trusted expert and consultant in this selling process. Once you have had the exploratory meeting, you can begin discussing who else in the organization needs to be included.

You'll note at this level we don't really specifically mention "managed IT services". The discussions are about finding problems you can fix, and not about what specifically you will use to fix them. Talk too much IT and you're going to get bumped to IT or immediately dismissed as "something we already have".

Some people feel that if they can't sign the cheque, there is no value in meeting with them. We feel that any conversation is valuable. You're not walking in to the first meeting with a pen and a contract – you don't even know if YOU want the business at this early stage. Why not meet with someone who has the real skinny on how things actually work at a company? The Office Manager will know all the politics at play, the budget, the actual time it takes to get any decisions made at the company, and will be the person whose life is most improved when better technology choices get made.

Recruit the Office Manager to make your sale for you. When the Office Manager goes to the President with an idea, it gets considered. When the President comes to the Office Manager with an idea, it gets put out to tender.

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PITCHING HUMAN RESOURCES

Personally, I love to pitch HR. First, they actually answer their phones. Second, they aren't as saturated as other positions in the company. Meaning, they get fewer sales calls.

One of the best ways to prospect for new MSP business is to watch the Help Wanted ads in your city. When an IT-related ad is posted, add that company to your prospecting list and schedule a call for about five days later. Remember, someone has just made the decision that they are going to hire for this position. They have invested in an ad, so they've spent some money. They haven't invested in a recruiting firm yet, which means they are still very optimistic they are going to find the person they want. Calling in too soon will lower your chances of getting the opportunity to present your services. A few days in, they will have had a chance to review the resumes that have come in so far. If they aren't pleased with the results, this will be a great time to pitch.

"It's Dave calling from ABC IT in Atlanta. I noticed you recently ran an ad online looking for a POSITION TITLE. Is someone leaving your organization, or are you adding to your team?"

Don't share too much in that first sentence. They may think you are a recruiting firm to begin with, and that's okay. If they ask if you are a recruiter, make sure you clearly state that you work with companies that are making changes to their IT teams and infrastructure. You are not a staffing firm.

Your goal should be to learn a little more about their network, current team and plan for growth.

If someone is leaving:
"Before you make your next hire, I'd appreciate the opportunity to present our company as an alternative to making an in-house hire. How many computers is your current team member supporting?" The point of that sentence is to qualify, and to continue to ask questions that can't be answered with a YES or NO.

If they are large enough to meet your desired desktop qualifier, suggest that a good interim solution – just in case they don't find the appropriate person in time – would be a firm like yours. When would be a good time for you to meet with them? A network health assessment as one team member leaves and before the next one starts would give everyone a thorough understanding of what changes may need to be made and allow for effective succession planning!

If they are adding head count:

Find out more about the infrastructure and the size of their IT team. If you are gunning for pure play managed, you likely don't want to pitch HR, as they definitely do not have any authority to make decisions here. Just find out what you want to know before moving on to pitch the CEO or CFO. If you want project work, this is a great time to get championed in to the IT department through HR.

"Before you add a new team member, we would be interested in speaking with your IT Director about providing any support or services that may be lacking while you go through the hiring process."

In smaller firms, HR is likely the responsibility of another team member – it will be rare for a team of under 20 to have a designated HR person. Most of the HR conversations will be held with larger companies.

So, can you pitch HR without a job post?

Yes. And we like it. Who is going to know first when a company is planning to make an IT hire? HR.

This will not quickly win business, but if you begin developing a relationship with HR personnel at the companies where you want to be winning business, you may very well get a phone call before that ad goes up. This is a relationship you need to maintain. Birthday cards. Quarterly emails. Christmas cards.

If you don't like the "farming" approach to cold calling, and you want to aim for an appointment on every dial, HR can be used as a launch pad to the position you do want to reach. Ask them to help you find the best person to speak with about your services. HR will know who is responsible for – and who makes the actual purchase decisions for – any service or product in the company. Ask to be transferred – an internally transferred call gets answered far more often than an external call from an unknown number.

One other approach to try – are you offering a cloud-based solution that would add value to the HR process? You can win a company over one application at a time.

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PITCHING SALES

We have built this strategy using the "Givers Gain" philosophy, which we learned about by attending our BNI group. (BNI can be an amazing resource if you commit to attendance and participation!)

Sales reps may not be the right people to pitch to win managed services contracts, but use this cold calling strategy and you can create a large external sales force that will cost you absolutely nothing and will sell managed services for you!

Here's the pitch:

"It's Joe calling from ABC IT in Atlanta. My client base includes companies that have between 20-200 employees, and that are technology dependent – like professional services firms. I wanted to chat with you about potentially exchanging referrals. Is now a good time?"

That also makes an excellent voicemail message, minus the question at the end. You can also use it to send out messages on LinkedIN without getting flagged for spamming!

The catch, of course, is that you'll need to be invested in this process and prepared to participate.

Building a strong referral network will be imperative to growing your MSP. Try this approach at the President level if you are a business owner yourself. If you can, spend time every day trying to grow your referral network. This is a great way to network without leaving your office. Once you've identified a good fit, set up a meeting, learn more about each other, and commit to finding each other leads.

I find using a question like *"What would really help your company right now?"* can open up that conversation. Some companies will be facing staffing challenges, if you can learn more about the open roles within an organization you may be able to position some of your new referral partners for success. Once you have earned the respect and trust of a company in your network, and have been regularly sending them leads, it is perfectly acceptable to ask for their business as well. The sales rep you have been feeding leads to will happily champion you up the ladder.

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PITCHING MARKETING

Now, we're aware that marketing likely doesn't make the IT spend. However, here's something you need to understand – marketing answers their phones. Sales and Marketing are your two highest potentials for getting a real live person on the phone in any organization. If you are floundering trying to get an audience with the President or the Controller, and you want the business, you have to find another way in. Sales, as we discussed last week, is simple because you have something they want. Referrals. Marketing is a different animal — while responsible for helping the company drive revenue, their role is to create interest, not close specific deals. So how, you ask, can you sell a non-marketing service to the marketing department?

The short answer is you can't. You need to sell them a marketing tool. Or at least have one to pitch to them. Assuming you are reselling several SaaS productivity tools already, you need to choose another for your arsenal. For example:

- Blacklist monitoring
- Marketing automation
- Landing page generators
- Cloud based Contact Centers
- Contact Management

We don't shill for any particular service over others, but there are thousands to look at it. Start exploring your options and choose the ones that make the most sense to you. As you move your current and future clients towards the cloud, the odds are you will do it one application at a time, and marketing doors are always open. Your partners will teach you how to sell and support their solutions. Don't try to be everything to everyone – pick a few solutions that dovetail nicely into the services you already offer.

Once you engage with the marketing department — here we refer to both over and under 20 seat organizations — you can easily ask to discuss other solutions with other team members You won't win a managed contract from marketing, but you'll win the opportunity to be championed in through

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marketing. Even if you don't sell a marketing solution to this company (hint, that's not your end game, eye on the prize) you can nurture this relationship and meet the members of the team you CAN sell a managed contract to.

If you are picking up on anything through this series, I hope it is that cold calling is all about starting relationships, and creating conversations that turn cold calls into warmer calls into warm leads into hot opportunities.

You aren't going to win them all**. You aren't going to win more than ten percent of them**, statistically. The difference between a warm introduction and a cold all is a ten percent conversion versus a one percent conversion. While you may be reading this thinking "I'm not going to start selling 30/month marketing apps!", just consider the difference that extra nine percent will make to your MRR long term.   If you call 100 companies absolutely cold – meaning you have no reference to any shared contacts, groups, organizations, associations or friends – you will likely get a meeting with ONE person.

Of the ten meetings you get, you'll likely close one to three, depending on the level of qualification and where they are in their buying cycle. If you call 100 people where you can reference your relationship with their Director of Marketing, you will likely get to meet with TEN of them.

So if you can close one deal for every thousand cold calls (that's the math…break it into manageable goals or it seems very daunting!) the law of numbers dictates you should be able to close ten deals for every thousand warm calls.   The more people you make contact with in an organization, the more warm leads you have to pursue.   Add marketing tools to your cloud services practice and it can pay off with managed services contracts long term.

PITCHING THE IT DEPARTMENT

Don't pitch the IT Department!

I'm kidding. You are going to get transferred to the IT department all the time. You should make the most of the call. Even if you don't want to do any project work, the conversation you have with IT will arm you for the conversations you want to have with other contacts within the company.

If you are not prepared to do any project based work to eventually position yourself to win a managed contract from this firm, a conversation about what projects they may require support on this year will still be beneficial to you. A quick conversation should tell you what challenges they are experiencing, what major purchases they are considering, and how focused the company is on continuity and security. Are there plans to move to the cloud? If so, what is their plan to do so? Are they adding head count? Are they technology dependent? Technology strategic? Proactive? Reactive? A meeting is not going to be a waste of your time – you don't ever have to quote on business you don't want, but you may learn a great deal about the company, and it will arm you with the facts you need to make your case for managed services at the C level. Here are the problems. Here is a solution that makes sense.

We have a lot of clients who want to move towards a pure play managed services business model, and who stick firmly to that conviction. They don't work with anyone who isn't paying a monthly support contract. If that's where you are right now, you are in an enviable position. This post is for the rest of us, who don't quite have the luxury of turning away projects quite yet.

First, go in humble. Nobody likes to be made to feel they aren't doing a great job, and anyone challenged will protect their turf. Go in asking how you can help them achieve their goals. How can you make them look like a rock star? Some questions you can ask:

If you could wave a magic wand and immediately fix one thing about your role there, what would that be?

When was the last time you took a vacation?

When are you adding another team member?

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When was the last time you required the support of an external team?

What is the next purchase you're going to consider?

What are your thoughts on (anything you want to learn – company specific or industry specific)

Second, avoid talking about technology specifics as much as possible. You are a sales rep when you're making this call – it's not your job to troubleshoot on the phone. Don't get sucked into a discussion about the pros and cons of whatever — they should be paying you for that discussion. If you realize you are happily geeking out on the phone, reign in the conversation. I know, it's fun for you, but put your sales hat back on and take control of the conversation again by asking for a meeting.

We know a lot of companies that started with projects – like Office 365 migrations – and ended up winning managed contracts a year later. Things change, people leave and disaster strikes — it does not hurt to be in the rolodex (I'm dating myself) as a trusted adviser when it hits the fan.

The IT department should not be your first call. Or even your second call. As I mentioned earlier, you **will** get sent to IT. You'll get sent there by the gatekeeper, by the HR department, by the President – they will send you there. Arguing that "IT doesn't make the decision" with people doesn't win you business. Talking to someone in IT and coming back to them after the conversation with your findings will work much, much better.

PART EIGHT: PITCHING THE CONTROLLER

The Controllers role is to mitigate financial risk while identifying ways the company could do more with less.   The difference between the under 20 seat and over 20 seat company for this position title is that in a smaller firm the Controller is likely still fulfilling the role of bookkeeper in addition to that of the Controller, and in a larger firm the Controller is managing a team that supports day to day accounting processes.   The pitch is the same, but the level of difficulty in reaching the Controller will be significantly higher in larger firms.

My best advice pitching to this role is this: pay attention to your timing! (Do not make sales calls around tax time!!!)   Always ask permission to proceed here. You have no idea what they're in the middle of. Payroll will always trump a sales pitch, but since there isn't really a predictable pattern to avoid, you'll have to ask the straightforward *"Is now a good time to talk?"* If so; great! If not, try to get a commitment for a calendared discussion, or ask them for a recommendation for another point of contact within the company. That way you can engage someone new with the warm introduction of the Controller, which will lend some weight to your discussion. *"I spoke with Frank earlier today, and he suggested we have a conversation."*

Assuming they are free to chat, the first thing you'll want to learn is how they are currently receiving their IT Support, so you can focus on one of two different pitches.

Pitching to replace their in-house IT

If they have an in-house IT "guy", you will be able to present a tremendous argument for a fixed-fee managed services relationship. It won't be a fast close, but it will begin what could be a very lucrative win for you down the road. Be delicate. You're talking about replacing someone that they work with. We suggest inviting them to your offices for the first meeting vs. visiting them on-site. They are going to be uncomfortable with the idea of you coming there for what is likely a very preliminary meeting.

Lead with financials. No overtime. Predictable invoices. Support 24/7 and 365 -- all for less than they are paying currently. Then, discuss other things you can offer. Better and more current certifications, for example. More experience. Fresh eyes. A team of experts vs. one likely overburdened IT "guy". Explore their disaster recovery or business continuity planning especially as it applies to financial risks. One of the best questions we've added to our talking points this year is this one: ***"Could your company survive a financial breach, and are you certain you're 100% protected against one?"***

Pitching to replace a competitor

The Controller will have a very good understanding of what their current invoicing looks like for their IT partner. They likely manage all contracts as well, so they will know exactly when that relationship will potentially be ending. They will be able to quickly do the math on whether or not you are bringing value to the table and they will be able to tell you when you may be considered.

One thing we love to present here is the fractional CIO relationship combined with the NHA. If their current provider isn't meeting with them quarterly to discuss their network, current trends and threats and plan for changes and company growth, this is an excellent service to lead with.

"We meet with our clients every quarter to review their network health reports with them and suggest ways they can better leverage their technology investments. This service is included in our flat rate monthly quote, and it is offered in addition to our day to day proactive monitoring and maintenance. When was the last time you had a complete IT systems review?"

You can continue on to discuss the value of the Network Health Assessment, and ask for the meeting.

For larger companies, we have a saying around here – most of the time, if someone who isn't involved in managing the network day to day can drop the name of the IT firm they work with immediately, you have an opportunity to win this business, because there's a reason they know the name – it's coming up a lot. That means it's time for contract negotiations, or there have been issues. Nobody really remembers the name of the provider they never have to call.

Remember, the Controller's role is very cost-focused. You don't want to win business by being cheaper, you want to win business by being better. If their current provider is considerably less expensive and they don't perceive there to be any issues, this isn't the right time to pitch.

PITCHING THE PRESIDENT/CEO

So, you have used all your charm and skill (or you just lucked into them picking up their phone when you dialed in direct) and have the President on the phone. You've got a minute to get their attention, what now?

I always introduce myself quickly and acknowledge that it's a sales call before I launch in to why I'm calling. It's just respectful. People appreciate the direct approach, and they don't spend your elevator pitch first trying to figure out how they know you and then feeling a little put off when they realize it's a sales call. Want to avoid the *"Look, I'm on the other line right now, can you call me back"* cut off? Be direct, be honest and be quick.

"Good morning Joe. Thanks for taking the call. My name is Carrie Simpson, I'm calling from ABC IT in Atlanta. We haven't met before, this is a sales call. Is now a good time for a quick chat?"

Keep your pitch simple, and free of unquantifiable filler words like "the best", "the greatest", etc.

"Joe, we work with small business owners to help them use technology better, plan for change, prepare for a disaster, decrease their overhead, and increase their productivity. I'm calling to learn how we might help COMPANY NAME. Of the things I've just mentioned, which jumps out at you as the highest priority there today?"

We ask the question like this for a reason. One, it's open ended. It requires an answer that isn't "yes" or "no". Two, they will think about their response and come back to you with a starting point for the sales process. If they want to talk continuity, your conversation becomes laser focused on continuity only. If they want to talk cost savings, don't bother talking about continuity. You don't have to sell everything in your toolkit on this call – you just need to get to the next step in the sales process. You don't even need to mention managed services – that will come later. The term 'managed services' means something to you and I, but to most buyers, it's just another technology term they don't understand and throwing it in there needlessly muddies the conversation.

If they won't answer the question, ask if you can send them information and move on.

If they genuinely don't know the answer to the question, my guess is this company is not technology dependent enough to see value in managed services yet. If there's no pain, there's no opportunity and it's very difficult to create one.

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If their response is "We already have someone who does this for us" you can try my favorite approach:

"Look, Joe – the worst time to go looking for a new IT firm is when you desperately need a new IT firm. When a company calls us with their house on fire, if something goes wrong that their current provider didn't expect or couldn't handle, they are going to pay a premium for us to come in there and resolve it right away. It never hurts to have an established relationship with another company you trust. Let us come in and chat with you, you can throw your biggest technology challenges at us, and let's see if we can find a solution that makes sense for you. If we can, great, we get the opportunity to win your business. If we can't, you lose nothing and you stay with the firm you're working with now. We need about an hour on-site with you to review your network. When can you give me an hour this month?"

Now, shut up. I mean it. Do not say another word until they answer you. They will come back to you with a suggestion of when to meet, or they will come back to you with an objection.

If it's a suggestion, open up your calendar and get that outlook invite onto their calendar while they are still on the phone with you. After they have clicked "accept", ask the questions that will help you better prepare for your meeting. If you can, you should start to turn the conversation personal – by that I mean, spend a few minutes engaging if they aren't rushing you off the phone. Talk about your kids or ask about their interest in golf or hockey or whatever – you just want one minute where they see you as a real person, a person they might like to have a chat with again sometime, and not a nameless faceless sales guy. A good way to do this is during the calendaring process – if you don't take meetings before nine because you run your kids to daycare every day, you can bring that up. If you aren't taking meetings on Thursday because you're leaving on vacation, mention that. It's a great way to encourage them to also open up a little. **People don't buy technology, they buy interesting ideas from people they like and trust.**

If it's an objection, which one was it?

"We're really not interested."

This could mean "*We're not going to leave our current provider*" or "*We just made a huge investment in new infrastructure*" or "*We're shutting down our company next month*".

There's only one really good counter to this:

"Look, Joe. What would we have to do to win your business? I'm curious. Be as specific as you can."

This approach is non-confrontational and non-manipulative. It's disarming. It gives them one more opportunity to tell you what's really going on there. This is where we usually learn things like their wife's brother owns the company that does their IT support.

I like this approach better than trying to slowly poke holes in the support they are current receiving. This allows them to tell you where they think the holes are and keeps you framed as the guy who really wants to earn their business, not the pushy know-it-all criticizing a decision they made.

Managed Sales Pros
Now you're talking.

We use multiple approaches at Managed Sales Pros. If one doesn't work, we wait 90 days and try another one. If you've got a great approach that works for you, keep doing it. If your current approach isn't working, we encourage you to try some of the tips we have shared.

Thank you for reading, and Happy Selling!

Carrie Simpson
CEO & Founder
Managed Sales Pros

Carrie Simpson is the founder of Managed Sales Pros, a lead generation firm dedicated to providing new business opportunities for MSPs. Carrie teaches IT firms how to build, manage, and grow their sales pipelines. You can follow us on Twitter @sales_pros and connect with Carrie on LinkedIn.

#CCTOTD: Try asking "How does that sound to you?" in place of "Is that something that would be of interest to you?"