Spring 2005

SALES connection

BLITZING your way to success

By Andrea Sittig-Rolf

... a Blitz is an energy-packed day of practicing sales techniques, regrouping, and sharing experiences ...

Last summer the PEMCO DIAs experienced the power of the outbound telephone call Blitz as a proactive selling tool for both increased sales and consistency throughout the sales process. As official "BlitzMaster," I had the opportunity to introduce the Blitz process to the PEMCO Direct Sales Team.

What's a sales Blitz? Briefly stated, a Blitz is an energy-packed day of practicing sales techniques, regrouping and sharing experiences, and then getting back on the phone to practice some more (usually "stealing" great ideas from our peers!).

The Blitz was so effective the group's ready to engage in another round! What's the magic formula? Practice, practice, practice! So, during the course of the training, not only do we have some incredible energy going that pumps up everyone to compete and be successful; the agents also learn from the concepts taught in the training and from each other. Now for the twist: The agents actually practiced what they learned on live PEMCO prospects and customers during the course of the training. Although we use many different techniques, what quickly rises to the top as most helpful are those that relate to overcoming common objections, tracking personal call ratios, and leaving effective voice-mail messages.

What have we learned from each other and from the Blitz process, so far? Here's a review:

Top Six Most Common Objections and How to Overcome Them

I would like to review this with my spouse.

Of course, I do the same thing. I'm just curious ... will you recommend PEMCO? What questions do you think your spouse will have?

Or, for the particularly bold ...

Of course, I do the same thing. Would it help if I called your spouse? Where can I reach him/her right now?

I'm happy with my current insurance company.

That's great! Actually, I don't mind being second. How about I review your coverage and provide a quote just to make sure ...

Or

That's good. One of the services I offer as a licensed agent is an insurance "check up." I'd be happy to provide you with a quote just to compare it with your current policy.

I just want a quote.

OK. Are you looking strictly for coverage that will satisfy the legal requirements, or do you want to evaluate total protection?

Or

Of course, most of the customers that we talk with want to get right to the quote. So we usually start by asking if you are most interested in fulfilling the legal requirements or whether your goal is to be totally protected.

Why don't you just send me some literature?

OK. I want to be sure I send the information that best answers your questions. What type of information would you like?

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Or

Of course, I'm happy to do that. I'm just curious ... what specifically did you have in mind?

Why should I switch to you? You're not saving me any money.

I know that money is important when deciding on insurance. You also mentioned that ___________ was important to you. Let's talk about that for a minute. (Review the issues.)

Any objection. (This technique is called The Ledge*.)

That's exactly why I called!
(Next, ask an open-ended question to keep the conversation going. Open-ended questions begin with who, what, why, where, when, or how.)

(*The Ledge, as defined by Stephan Schiffman in his book *Telesales*, is a technique that gives you a foothold. Put into action, this technique works by briefly answering the prospects question or objection, and then immediately posing a question of your own.)

Top Four Most Effective Voice Mail Messages

In a recent edition of *The Puget Sound Business Journal* column I write called *Sales Solutions*, I offered a few tips regarding leaving effective voice-mail messages.

First, keep them brief. The idea is that you want the prospect to call you back, not to leave a three-minute PEMCO commercial via voice-mail.

Second, referrals are always a great way to develop new business, so practice asking your happy customers for them. Leverage these referrals when leaving voice-mail messages for new prospects by telling the prospect who referred you, but not much more – again, keeping it brief.

Third, referencing the prospects homeowner's policy or potential discount eligibility creates a curiosity within your prospect that will motivate him/her to call you back – and what else? You guessed it – keep it brief! I can't say that enough. As salespeople, we have a tendency to try to sell our wares via voice-mail, but trust me, it doesn't work. In this case, less is more, so begin practicing these brief, but effective voice-mail techniques and listen as your phone will start to ring with an abundance of return phone calls.

Hi, this is ___________ calling from PEMCO Insurance. I'm calling about your homeowner's policy. Will you please return my call at 800-555-5555? Thank you.

Hi, this is ___________ calling from PEMCO Insurance. Mary Smith suggested I give you a call. Will you please return my call at 800-555-5555? Thank you. (Mary Smith is known by the prospect you are calling.)

Hi, this is ____________ calling from PEMCO Insurance. I know you've been working with John Smith from PEMCO and in looking at your record, I just want to be sure we've explored all of the opportunities for you to join PEMCO. Will you please return my call at 800-555-5555? Thank you. (John Smith represents your desk partner or an agent who used to work at PEMCO.)

Hi, this is ____________ calling from PEMCO Insurance. In looking at your record, you may be eligible for some additional discounts you're not currently getting. Please give me a call at your convenience at 800-555-5555. Thank you.

How to Track Calls and Calculate Call Ratios

Another important aspect of call Blitzing is to keep track of your personal ratios as you make your calls. For example, tracking calls, connects, quotes, sales, and even how often you hear the word "no" will help you decide what level of activity you need to reach your goals.

A call is defined as picking up the phone and dialing out or answering an incoming call. A connect is defined as actually talking to the decision maker. Leaving a voice-mail message doesn't count as a connect, or speaking to someone who is not the decision maker doesn't count as a connect. If, however, the decision maker returns a message you've left, it then counts as a connect. What you're tracking is your success rate in converting connects to quotes and ultimately sales. It's also important to know how often you have to hear the word "no" before hearing "yes". This is what's known as your "no quota."

For those of you who haven't Blitzed at PEMCO, inserted is a log sheet that many agents are using to track their selling ratios.

I encourage you to practice the described new techniques for overcoming common objections, tracking personal call ratios, and leaving effective voice-mail messages, or better yet, participate in a **Blitz Experience**™ program sponsored by PEMCO! Contact Lauriann Reynolds for details at lauriann.reynolds@pemco.com.

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BLITZING
your way to success

Blitz Numbers Tracking Worksheet

CALLS	CONNECTS	QUOTES	NO's	SALES	$ VALUE
O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	
O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O		
O O O O O	O O O O O				
O O O O O	O O O O O				
O O O O O	O O O O O				
O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	
O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O		
O O O O O	O O O O O				
O O O O O	O O O O O				
O O O O O	O O O O O				
O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	
O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O		
O O O O O	O O O O O				
O O O O O	O O O O O				
O O O O O	O O O O O				
O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	
O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O	O O O O O		
O O O O O	O O O O O				
O O O O O	O O O O O				
O O O O O	O O O O O				
TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	TOTAL	$$ TOTAL $$

See the back of this sheet for examples and instructions.

We've provided this sheet for you to copy and use to Blitz your way to success! It's easy; just follow these instructions to map your results.

Calls

Fill a circle under "Calls" each time you dial the phone, whether you reach anyone or not. If your focus is on outside sales, the purpose of tracking your outbound calls is to determine the ratio of pro-active, outbound calls versus the number of sales made. Similarly, if you handle incoming calls, you can also use this form to track the calls you receive as a comparison to sales made. If you know how many calls you need to make a sale, every call is a successful step to another close!

Connects

Connects are made when you actually talk to the decision maker. Leaving a voice mail doesn't count, unless the decision maker calls you back and you actually have a conversation.

Quotes

In this section you complete a bubble when you've had the opportunity to quote a policy. If you complete a red bubble, you're red hot and doing especially well based on average statistics!

NOs

It's also important to track the number of times you hear "No" when making your calls. Why on earth would you want to track every time you hear "No?" Well, believe it or not, counting each "No" is equally important to counting your sales! How else will you know how often you typically hear "No" before you hear "Yes?" Hearing "No" is a very real part of the selling process, so it's important to know your personal "No" ratio so you can realistically plan your prospecting activities each week.

Sales

When you close the sale, you complete a bubble in this section.

Value

In this column, write the dollar value of your sale.

Columns

Each vertical grouping of bubbles represents about an hour worth of calls. You should be able to make 15 to 25 outbound calls per hour, depending on the frequency in which you actually connect with decision makers.

Tracking Ratios

Now, here's the fun part! Once you've completed the form, add up the number of bubbles you've completed in each column and put the total number at the bottom under the word Total. Then divide to get your ratios. For example, if you want to know how many calls it takes to make a certain number of sales, divide the sales column total by the calls column total and that percentage will give you your calls to sales ratio. Or, if you want to know how many connects you have to make to quote a certain number of policies, divide the quotes column total by the connects column total for your connects to quotes ratio. Once you understand your personal ratios, you can begin to plan your weekly Blitz activity to reach your goals.

Good luck and Happy Blitzing!