

# Bell Ringers

The salespeople who get the most calls often are the ones who made the most calls—particularly when times are tough.



By Rick Davis



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“That sound of silence you hear may be your own doing.”

This is the advice a friend of mine, Rob, received from his father when he worked for his father at their family’s vinyl siding dealership.

One day, while sitting in his father’s office, the father asked, “Do you hear that?”

“I don’t hear anything,” Rob replied.

“Me neither,” replied his father, the man Rob considers his most influential business mentor. “Go make the phones ring.”

This is sage advice that we can adhere to today. We know sales success is a matter of hard work and perseverance, yet we allow our fear to cripple our sales activity. Fear paralyzes us because we believe the competition, combative price negotiations, and a housing slowdown create insurmountable obstacles. When the phones are silent and sales slow, this is a sure sign that you must redouble your sales efforts.

You probably hear many business associates criticize the media hype about a housing downturn, and we are often guilty of the very same negative talk. Salespeople have begun to blame their slow sales volume on the economic downturn and other factors that are out of their control. The reality is that the housing market, while not as robust as the

first half of the decade, still provides ample opportunity for those that want to get out there and get after it. In other words, victory will go to the hardest workers!

Instead of rationalizing, do this:

**1. Make calls to get calls.** If you want to make the phone ring, start making phone calls to prospects and then do not stop. Make this the first priority of the week; rather than figure out how you can squeeze in an hour or two to make phone calls with all the other activities you have in your week, block out an hour *before* you begin your week. Decide which hour (or more) you will devote exclusively to phoning potential new customers and letting them know you are interested in their business. If they don’t know you are out there and interested in them, how can you expect them to call you?

**2. Don’t stop prospecting—ever!** A CEO for a leading industry manufacturer theorizes that organizations and people do the “right thing” when they face a crisis. It is during challenging times that people focus their energies on the most important things. Remember this two years from now when the housing industry is strong again. Hone your prospecting skills now and then never stop using this impor-

tant skill set for the remainder of your career. A great salesman never stops prospecting!

**3. Don’t wait for the next marketing push.** Most people assume the marketing department is responsible for making the phone ring. The normal theory is that marketing can advertise, create events, promote special programs, and increase market awareness about your company and its products. But the simplest way to get the word out about your company is to pick up the phone. I always dream that an organization will strive to engage the entire sales team and create the energy that gets every salesperson making routine prospecting calls. If every salesperson in your organization strives to contact all the builders in the marketplace, the word will spread and the energy of your sales will make the phone ring.

There is hardly a salesman that has not heard the mantra that “selling is a numbers game.” You know this is true and understand that getting the phone to ring is about introducing your services to enough people and creating value and energy that they want to be a part of. Let enough people know that you want to be part of their business. Accept that you will not get all of them—but also know that you will get enough to make the phones ring again. ■