



# More Than a Numbers Game

## Pursue the right clients & relationships with purpose

by: Reena Philpot, Reena Philpot Sales Coaching

“It’s a numbers game.” That’s what they told me. It’s all about getting in front of as many people as possible. Whether you are new to sales or you’ve been here a while, you’ve heard it’s all about numbers.

That’s precisely what fueled my early sales days of 100 phone calls and my days of 50 in-person cold calls. I realize my memory only recalls the days with the extreme numbers. Not every day was a 50-cold-calls day, but many were, and every day I met the minimum of 20 as recommended.

I started early and stayed late. If a person could work hard and make it, I would make it. I talked to people. I even went home every night with a stack of collected business cards and entered the information into the CRM. The CRM was not in the cloud and my manager never looked at my results. It was purely for my notes — and it was a drag. I was exhausted and about to give up.

If it really was all about numbers, I would have been rolling in the dough. When I asked for directions, I was told: “It is a process and it takes time. Keep doing the calls.” Guess what? All that effort resulted in zero sales.

I was 45 days in and all I had sold was a deal I inherited from a sales rep who had quit. The previous rep had left one deal undone. All I had to do was collect a signature and, just like that, I had a number beside my name on the board.

I understood the sales cycle was longer than 45 days, but I was tired. Something was missing. I had done the calls, collected the information and made the notes in the CRM. I didn’t have a lot to go on. I hadn’t found many people to go back out and see after those hundreds of calls. They all seemed satisfied with their particular situations. I was getting nowhere. If I had looked at the data and known the next step for any of those hundreds of accounts, I would have been more encouraged, but it felt like I had little more to go on than I did when I started.

Then I realized what was missing. I had been calling on too many of the wrong people. I had been going after numbers. The numbers game had failed me — or at least that’s what I thought. I took a look at the company’s current customers. When I considered where the experienced reps were having success, I realized that’s not exactly what I had targeted. I also noticed different reps with different styles and personalities earned different kinds of business. The one thing they all had in common was they understood their customers. They liked them. They had stories to tell about them.



I was choosing any business that might need just a few copies daily. Their needs were few and any equipment they already had was sufficient. Plus, the ones I was calling on weren’t the types of accounts or people I was most comfortable getting to know. I didn’t understand them or their businesses well enough to begin conversations, much less start relationships with them.

I began to understand that I needed to get picky and target a specific market. That’s when I started making a list comprised of businesses in my territory with the highest needs. The list gave me a place to start my weeks and days.

Then, I chose to go where I was most comfortable first — to the accounts that were most comfortable for me. The accounts I understood the most were based on my experience and background. I went to schools, local governments, churches and nonprofits. Then, after I had seen those, I started to branch out, but I focused my efforts and stuck to my plan.

That was the first step I took to effectively establish my territory and make a career in sales work for me. I started to understand the people I called on. I liked them, so I enjoyed going

back. I began having stories to share and closing deals of my own.

So, did the numbers game fail me? No. It built resilience. It was like training for a marathon. Every call and every “no” made me stronger. But it drove me to my wits end just enough to make me stop and evaluate what could be missing. It also bought me time to learn. No one will fire a rep willing to do 50 in-person cold calls in a day. My manager was always happy to answer my questions. He knew I was putting in effort and was willing to learn.

Actually, it is still accurate to say sales is a numbers game. The fact is, at any given time, there are just a certain number of prospects with a need or that are in a position to purchase products. If you don't reach enough prospects, you won't get enough business.

However, it's a bit more than a numbers game. Here are three questions to ask yourself before you let the numbers game discourage you:

(1) Who and where do our products serve and fit best in my territory?

(2) Looking at the list of who and where, which do I know the most about? Who do I already understand the needs of most?

(3) In what areas of our market can I improve my knowledge? What types of businesses do I need to learn more about?

The numbers can serve you well, especially once you have built the resilience and strength to pursue the right clients and relationships with purpose ...

We could all benefit from making 50 in-person cold calls a day. It is extreme — and some might even say ridiculous — these days. It is the era of social media. Is sending 50 invites to connect the same as making 50 cold calls? In my opinion, it is not the same at all. But that could be a whole other conversation.

The numbers can serve you well, especially once you have built the resilience and strength to pursue the right clients and relationships with purpose, intention and a

timeline in mind. ■

*Reena Philpot is co-owner of BTA member Precision Duplicating Solutions Inc., based in London, Kentucky, where she serves as sales manager. Philpot is also founder of Reena Philpot Sales Coaching and host of the Selling with Charm Podcast. She has spent the last 27 years as a salesperson and has a passion for teaching owners and sales team members simple sales techniques that allow them to hit their targets and goals with ease. Join in weekly as Philpot shares her tips and tricks to selling with charm: <https://selling-with-charm.captivate.fm/listen>.*

*She can be reached at [reena@reenaphilpot.com](mailto:reena@reenaphilpot.com). Visit [www.reenaphilpot.com](http://www.reenaphilpot.com).*

