

Calling Patterns of Today's Salespeople

Special Report by Tom Reilly

Are you making enough sales calls? Probably not.

Last fall, I conducted a study to determine the calling habits of B2B salespeople. Our sample was 297 distributor and manufacturer outside salespeople. My 33 years of sales training experience told me salespeople spend too much time doing things other than face-to-face (F2F) selling. The findings are disturbing.

First, some good news: 93% of distributor salespeople and 71% of manufacturer salespeople still cold call as a way to find new business. So much for the pundits that claim cold calling is dead. It is alive for those who have the skill and will to cold call.

Second, the average length of a F2F sales call for distributor salespeople is about 32 minutes. The average length of a sales call for manufacturer salespeople is 53 minutes.

Third, the disturbing stuff: distributor salespeople make a surprisingly low 14.5 F2F sales calls per week and manufacturer salespeople make a scant 7.5 F2F sales calls per week. Further, the average amount of time spent by B2B salespeople every week in F2F selling is a shockingly low 8 hours! In 1982, that number was 19.5 hours per week (based on a 40-hour week), and in 2006 it was 14.63 hours per week. What happened?

Technology provides salespeople with additional ways to communicate with customers. This leads some people to believe that face time is less important. It is not. Technology complements, not replaces, face time with customers. Companies have leaned operations and discovered ways to do more with less. This implies that leaning a sales force and giving salespeople additional responsibilities distracts them from face time with customers. In what non-selling activities are you engaged? Are these activities more important than face time with customers? If so, you are a part-time salesperson. Part-time salespeople produce part-time results.

Some salespeople complain that buyers hide behind email and voice mail. Hiding is nothing new. Customers have always hidden behind administrative assistants and receptionists. Technology gives you a direct way to communicate with customers

versus relying on someone else to deliver your message. I prefer to leave a voice mail message or email message. No one communicates my enthusiasm as I do.

Some salespeople argue that cold calling is a waste of time because the “paradigm has shifted.” That last piece is a direct quote from a young salesperson who finally admitted that he dislikes and does not know how to cold call. Our research dispels this myth. Some salespeople complain they have no administrative support for proposals and reports that management requires. For decades, salespeople have complained about too much paperwork. Nothing new here.

If you spend 20% or less of your time in F2F selling situations, you are a part-time salesperson. That is not enough time to make acquisition and retention calls—hunting and farming. Few salespeople can maintain a steady stream of new business when 80% of their time is spent doing something other than selling. Identify all those things that prevent you from F2F selling time, and present these to your manager with a plan to shed these non-selling activities.

Author byline: Tom Reilly is a professional speaker and author of twelve books. Tom is literally the guy who wrote the book on *Value-Added Selling* (McGraw-Hill, 2010), the book that started the value selling revolution. For more information on Tom's presentations, training, and products, visit his website www.TomReillyTraining.com or call his office, 636-537-3360.

Follow us on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/tomreillyVAS>

Watch us on You Tube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0zvb4nw6_L4&feature=share