

LOSS OF CONTACT by Paul Reilly

“Houston, we have a problem. We have lost all communication with...”

Our prospects?

We have all been there. We meet with a prospect who starts to heat up. They like our company, they like us, and they like the solution we have provided. It is shaping up to be a nice sale, but we lose contact. The once-hot prospect has now cooled.

The prospect will ignore our voicemails, e-mails, and drop-in visits. If we do get to them, they typically respond by telling us to “call them back later” or “it is not a good time.” You can also get the most infamous stalling tactic of all “we’re still deciding” or “let me do some more research.” Whether the prospect responds or doesn’t, salespeople are now stuck in sales limbo.

Here is what happens in sales limbo. We end up dedicating more time and effort to the prospects that put us there. We become prisoners of hope because we have so much time and energy invested in this deal. In most cases, our desperation begins to show. We act like the desperate boyfriend or girlfriend constantly checking our phone, e-mail, and voicemail. Time is the currency exchanged in limbo, and we tend to spend too much of it.

To get out of limbo, we need to take action. Here are some tips to creating action and getting a response from your once-hot prospect:

- Ask the customer what has changed since your initial meeting. This is important information to have, because the customer’s priorities might have changed.
- Be more direct and blunt. Instead of saying, “Let’s get together and discuss a game plan. We are committed to this project and committed to you. We are always here for you. What time works best,” try this instead, “Are we moving forward on this project?” “Is this still a priority?” or “At this point, is it a matter of *if* or *when*.”
- Acknowledge the buyer’s pressure points in the communication. You can establish urgency, scarcity, or the magnitude of inertia. For example...

“We are rapidly approaching the deadline. Are we still the front-runner?”

“There are only two left in stock. Did you want to order before we run out?”

“We know the cost of our project is \$20,000. But what’s the cost of doing nothing?”

- Take a risk and be bold. At this point you have nothing to lose. What’s the worst that could happen? They will say no. At least you know where you stand.

A non-responsive customer is still sending you a message, something has changed. Your job is to figure out what has changed. Be direct and ask the customer. They will appreciate your candor and it gets the conversation going again. Now, you have an opportunity to rebuild your solution based on their current needs.

If the customer responds with “no,” it is time to move on. Feel the pain and learn, but at least you know it is over. For every *no* you hear, you’re more likely to hear *yes* on your next sales call.

To learn more effective ways to communicate with non-responsive prospects, join us for the next public seminar March 18th 2014. [Click here](#) for more information. To register, call 636-537-3360.