

WHERE DOES THE TIME GO?

Salespeople spend most of their time on non-revenue producing activities. Really?

A recent study found that salespeople spend more than 70% of their time doing things other than selling. Our research found that salespeople spend, at most, 30% of their time in face-to-face selling. The rest of the time is spent handling administrative tasks, making collections calls, resolving logistics issues, attending meetings, and filling out reports.

How can we call these folks “salespeople” anymore when less than half of their time is spent selling? Maybe we should call them "support account administrators who occasionally sell." Who is at fault--salespeople or management? Finger pointing does not really accomplish much other than scapegoating the blame.

It confounds me when salespeople tell me that they cannot make more face-to-face calls. Why not? Do buyers perceive little value in the meeting? Do managers require salespeople to yield to administrative distractions? Is traffic that bad?

I grew up in a sales culture where we were required to make eight face-to-face sales calls per day. If we were in the office between 8 AM and 5 PM, our bosses assumed we were goofing off, and we probably were. Sales managers scrutinized our phone credit card statements to make sure we did not spend the day doing phone work versus face-to-face selling. We did paperwork at night or on Saturday morning. If it sounds a bit Draconian, it was not. We were salespeople after all, not office people. I learned a work ethic that helped me start and run two successful businesses, and I am eternally grateful for the lesson. Maybe it is time for some old-school selling rules again.

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