

Unlocking the Door

When you hear the term gatekeeper, what does the term imply to you? Some people visualize David Spade's famous Saturday Night Live character that was tasked with controlling access to Dick Clark's office. In the skits, one notable person after another would come in to visit Dick Clark. Spade was famous for his "and you are...?" line. You'd be surprised how often sales professionals hear those words used in a condescending manner:

"And you are...?"
"And you're with...?"
"And you're calling about...?"



What makes those questions frustrating is that the next sound one usually hears is voice mail. The gatekeeper has successfully blocked you from the decision maker. Ugh!

Gatekeepers can be awfully helpful though. Some administrative assistants sometimes know far more about their managers' habits than the managers themselves. To build and strengthen a relationship, remember the following tips:

Treat them with Courtesy and Respect

Let's face it, they're just doing their job. If they weren't good at shielding their boss from every pen salesman this side of the Mississippi, they wouldn't have a job. Even when they're rude and dismissive to you, treat them nicely. Outside of their role as a gatekeeper, they may be the nicest person in the world. If you don't carefully watch the way you treat them, they can make your sales job miserable and block every single call.

Get to Know Them

As you sell to your client, you ought to seek to "sell" to the gatekeeper. The product you're selling is *you*.

Pick Their Brains

As stated earlier, gatekeepers know a great deal about their managers, their habits and schedules. When you get on the right side of a gatekeeper, they can make your sales job easier. Gatekeepers know the best time of the day to catch their boss, their decision-making process, what they like and what they don't like. They work with them intimately on a day-to-day basis.

A Note or Gift Doesn't Hurt

Gatekeepers can get frustrated when they see their boss or colleagues receiving little perks for doing their job. Take the time to send them a thank you note or a little gift... just as a way to say thanks. They'll appreciate that you remembered them and will return the favor in kind.

Be Real

Yes, you should be nice... but you should genuinely be nice. Don't put on an act and pretend to be that person's best friend. Most people can see right through airs and will be offended.

