



## The SMMarT Guy

# No, Thank You. CLICK!

By Kim Robinson

I was busy in my office one morning when the phone rang. I answered it and heard a male voice ask; "May I please speak with Kim Robinson?"

"Speaking."

"Hi, Mr. Robinson. This is Glen, from Mega Lawn Care; how are you today?" *(The run-on sentence is accurate, but the company name is changed to hide the guilty.)*

Great. A cold call. I responded to his insincere question about my health. "I'm fine, thanks."

Glen mistook my declaration of well-being as an invitation to launch into his sales pitch, with gusto if not sincerity. "Wetakegoodcareofyourlawnand...blah...blah...blah..." and his run-on

information dump drove me to instinctively, and completely, tune him out. After about a minute that seemed like an hour, I tuned back in and cut him off. "Glen. GLEN. STOP!"

He paused, took a quick breath and gave me his BIG CLOSE. "So, would you prefer a morning or afternoon appointment for your free consultation?"

I almost laughed out loud. I had tuned him out so well, I wasn't even clear what his 'free consultation' would cover. "No, thank you" and I hung up. Click. Adios, Glen.

Cold calling is a fact of life in business. The problem with it as a business tool is that few people do it well. Very few. In fact, 'information-dump Glen' was better than most simply because he said 'please.'

***"It's a numbers game... You have to go through so many no's to get to the yes... just keep hammering away and you'll make a sale."*** These stock motivators are rubbish when it comes to making cold calls to sell or to set appointments with prospects. These cliché lines liken cold calls to the way I cooked spaghetti in college: You know it's cooked when you throw it against the wall and some of it sticks. Was my college spaghetti good? No, but it was edible (well, for the most part). Do call center sales reps make sales and do sales people set appointments by throwing out their pitch until some of it sticks? Sure, and the experience for both caller and prospect is about as palatable as the spaghetti I cooked in college...

Just like learning to cook made for much better spaghetti (and happier landlords), embracing the following three steps will turn cold calls into much better business (and happier bank accounts):

### **Do not begin with 'how are you?'**

Nothing sings *'I'm a salesman trying to push you into buying something'* louder than a stranger's unctuous and insincere 'how are you?' at the beginning of a call.

### **Use the word 'calling.'**

Using the word is alliterative of professionalism and indicates you may be higher up the corporate food chain than you really are.

**Ask permission to continue.** Show respect

to the prospect for their time and their position and ask if they can speak with you at that moment.

Let's take a look at a good cold call opening. One that sets the caller apart from everyone else and gives him or her a real shot at doing some business:

CALLER: "May I please speak with Kim Robinson?"

ME: "Speaking."

CALLER: "Hi, Mr. Robinson. This is Glen from Mega Lawn Care **calling**. **Have you got a minute?**" (Or...Did I catch you at a good time? Can you give me just a couple of minutes?)

One of four things happen with this permission-based approach: The prospect **grants the caller permission to continue** by saying anything but "no." A 'sure,' or, "I've only got just a minute" grants the caller permission to continue and obligates the prospect to listen to the caller's next sentence.

The prospect says "no" because he really doesn't have time, in which case the caller gains face as a professional and will be able to schedule a non-cold call for later.

The prospect is stalling and will come around with the right comeback (which is: **Acknowledge - Benefit statement - Repeat brevity of time sought - Ask again for a minute**).

The prospect says "no" because he or she hates cold calls, in which case they won't buy anything anyway, so get it over with quickly and move on.

Three of these four possible outcomes put the caller in a much better position to establish a rapport and eventually make a sale.

Use a permission-based approach to cold calling and get more clients and make more money. Or, simply keep 'throwing spaghetti against the wall until some of it sticks.'...CLICK. ■

*Kim Robinson is the president of The SMMarT Consulting Group, Inc., an acquisition-focused marketing and sales training company based in Clive. Co-author of the book, Communicate Clearly, Confidently & Credibly, Kim also speaks professionally about creative marketing techniques, the consultative sales process, and the need for personal-touch communication in business. To reach Kim: Kim@SMMarTConsulting.com, or 515-223-5510.*

