

Phone Tactics

Tips to Success on the Phone



**Wasted efforts no more!
Turning phone traffic into signed leases**

The Apartment Guy
Professional Seminars Property Marketing

Today, we will discuss...

- The 5 steps of the phone sales process
- 7 Keys to building interest from your phone traffic
- The right questions to ask your prospects
- 16 Keys to effective listening on the phone
- How to create conviction and sell your community by phone
- How to get appointments every time
- What you can learn from call track reports
- How to be prepared for phone calls
- How to close your callers – without them walking in

Some statistics to get us started

Do you know where the most effort is wasted in property management? On the phone! How much do we spend, on average, to generate EACH phone call?

\$\$ _____

How many properties do most prospects call?

(Herry Research, 2005)

What is the typical phone conversion ratio for most leasing consultants?

(NAA leasing study, 2003)

What does that translate in to? A lot of wasted effort and a lot of missed opportunity. Today we are going to learn how to profit from your efforts on the phone and turn each caller into a potential **lease**.



The **5** Steps of the Phone Sales Process

What are the five steps of the phone sales process?

- A** _____
- I** _____
- C** _____
- D** _____
- C** _____

STEP ONE

You can't succeed until you know what is getting your customer's _____.

You get your customers attention when you have the "goods". **4** of them, actually.

Two are up to your company:

Good _____

Good _____

Two of them are up to YOU, when you answer the phone:

Good _____

Good _____

This step happens before the phone even rings. Advertising tends to get a prospects attention and lead them to us. That is one of the great things about the way we sell – the customer calls us, we don't usually do prospecting for new residents. You have to be educated and familiar with your advertising to know what information your prospect has seen or read already, and what they do not know. Don't waste your time reciting bullet points they have likely seen in print. Spend your time creating Interest in items they have not heard about yet, and expanding on what has interested them already.

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Things you need to know, before you answer the phone:

- * In what print guides do you currently advertise?
- * Are your prices spelled out in your advertisement(s)?
- * Are there any amenities missing from your print ad?
- * Where do you currently advertise online?
- * Are there photographs of your model interiors in your online ad?
- * Are all of your floor plans available to be seen and printed?
- * Can a prospect get step-by-step directions on the site he/she visited?
- * Is your current special or incentive listed in your ad, or can you use this as a “hook” at the end of your call?

STEP TWO

Find out how to build upon your customer's _____.

Your prospect has some interest, or a phone call wouldn't have been generated. You have to keep their interest by engaging them in your sales presentation on the phone. You maintain their interest by not being an infomercial and just using a generic pitch not tailored to their needs, you must build on and arouse your prospects' interest by telling them what your community has and offers that will benefit him or her. Remember, not just features but benefits. Be conversational and don't rush.

You've gotta sound _____ to generate and build upon your prospects _____.

During your conversation, pay attention to clues, context, pauses and harrumphs.

- * What does his or her voice tell you?
- * What about his or her use of vocabulary and language?
- * What is the callers attitude? Interest level?
- * Is the caller rushed, evasive, reserved?
- * How do you think the caller perceives you:
 1. As a professional consultant there to assist with empathy and understanding for their concerns
 2. Or as a slick salesperson out to make a quick deal?

Create Interest and Listen Effectively

7 Keys to creating interest



1. Ask _____
2. Build _____, Interestingly
3. Avoid _____
4. Avoid getting a _____
5. Be _____
6. Take it _____
7. Become genuinely interested in other _____

ONE - Ask questions to create interest. Answer questions with questions, leave some information out! Don't just answer the questions you are asked – you will quickly lose control of the call and the sales process. The right kinds of questions, ones that will get you a lot of information, are crucial to learning about your prospect and gaining their Interest.

Isn't this frustrating! The majority of our phone calls start with:

“Hi, how much are your two bedrooms?”



Don't just tell 'em! The thing is, most of these calls are generated from either a print guide or online advertisement. Why is that significant? Because they already have the price ranges (if your ads are well designed and well thought-out). That question, “How much are your two bedrooms, “ is just a comfortable, off-the-cuff question to get them started. So turn it around and **remain in control of the call:**

- ⇒ “We have a variety of floor plans with different features and amenities – let me find out a little bit more about what you are looking for and then I'll give you all the prices.”

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Easy, simple and you are in control. It wasn't hard to turn that conversation around, but now you are poised for the call of a consultant and a prospect. Keep it going with good questions:

? "I didn't get your name, mine is _____."

? "We appreciate your call, how did you find out about us?"

? "Have you ever seen **any** of our advertising?"

? "What about us caught your interest?"

Ask them permission to ask further questions, to get to the root of what they are looking for. Permission implies respect and value to the prospect!

? "Would it be all right if I asked you some questions, in order to find out exactly how we can meet your needs?"

? "When were you looking to make your move?"

? "What were you wanting in your next apartment home?"

? "Why are you leaving your current residence?"

Then use this information to paint a picture of the perfect apartment home for that resident.

AFTER selling **value first**, provide the **pricing last**. Then you can start the qualifying process with a question like:

? "Was there a price range you wanted to remain within? I am sure you saw our range in the _____ (apartment magazine) but what were you looking to spend?"

? "Our two bedrooms rent for between \$790 and \$1240 – would that fit within your budget?"

If you get **specific questions relating to your qualifications**, what it takes to qualify or what the costs are to get moved in, you can then go into this with your prospect. Otherwise, you need to proceed as though they are qualified. If you judge your prospect based on your short conversation, you are likely to be wrong.

GROUP ACTIVITY:

QUESTIONS



If your callers have spoken to two or three other properties, they have likely been asked the same old questions at each. On page 6, we uncovered 9 or 10 questions you can start using on the phone, but now I want you to think about **unique questions** you can ask to start building rapport and continuing a conversation. An example, let's say you are located downtown near three great art galleries. You can ask, "Do you like art? We are located right next to three unique art galleries which focus on local city artists."

Think of two to three **new questions** you can start asking today that can open the door to new conversation and rapport.

TWO – Build Interest, Interestingly! Be sure your building interest step is actually **interesting**. Conviction, fun and a well-thought out presentation are crucial. Don't be in the middle of two things at once – this comes through loud and clear to a prospect on the phone. If you aren't interested, why should *they* be? You have to paint a picture to be truly heard, reading off a list of amenities is as useful as reading the prospect your grocery list.

- Have fun
- Sound Interested
- Don't worry, be happy!
- Reflect a smile in your voice
- PAY ATTENTION, this isn't the time for multi-tasking

THREE - Avoid exaggeration or unsubstantiated claims when enticing interest. People can see, smell and hear crap. Avoid saying things like "it is unbelievable," "it is amazing," "you won't believe your eyes". These types of statements rarely apply to an apartment community. You can sell it without overselling it. If you have paid attention to the prospects' answers to questions, you should know what items your community offers are going to be important to them, so hype those!

Focus on ways you can _____ the prospects' life.

Save the prospect _____ and/or _____.

Make their life _____.

If you "sell" your amenities with these four ideals in mind, they will mean something to your prospect and they will start to understand why they should live there.

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FOUR - Avoid an interest generating question that can get you a negative response, "I'm not interested," or just plain "No!" Rather than:

"Why don't you come by Saturday to see our two bedroom?"

Which could easily get you a "no," try instead:

"Why don't you visit us on Saturday and I can show you how we can save you money and increase your quality of life!"

Hard to say no to this – as long as it is accurate and believable! In addition, be assumptive and ask questions with **either/or** choices.

"I am sure you will want to come by and see that apartment and we are open until 6 PM tonight for your convenience. Would you like to come this evening or is this Saturday better for you?"

"With what it sounds like you need, we have two great apartment homes for you. Do you think you would be more interested in a two-story townhouse floor plan or a flat two bedroom apartment with a huge balcony?"



FIVE - Be sincere and not fake, this again comes through loud and clear on the phone. Use the prospects name throughout your conversation, this is a great way to convey sincerity and that they are not just another caller. Be natural, not a phony.

Want to see how fake a bad salesperson can sound? Watch a cable shopping channel.

SIX - The take-away, make them think about losing what they have just found! You can create a sense of urgency and a sense of loss when you let a prospect know that their perfect two bedroom, their new home, has two other interested prospects coming into see it after work today. You have all heard the saying you don't know what you've got 'till it's gone? That is why the sense of urgency tactic is such a winner in sales. Again with the above steps, we have met this person's needs, told him/her we have what they want, so take it away. Procrastination and indecision are normal parts of life and are barriers in the sales process.

What is essential when instilling a sense of urgency?

Make it _____.

Your prospect won't ever believe you if you say this is the "only one."



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SEVEN - Lastly, reflect on this classic quote from Dale Carnegie –

“To be successful in sales, you have to be genuinely interested in other people”.

A good salesperson _____
more than they _____.



16 Keys to Effective Listening

1. Be _____ for calls – knowledge and practice
2. Limit _____ – take it seriously
3. Increase your _____ span
4. Think like the _____
5. Limit your own _____, ask questions!
6. Don't _____
7. Don't jump to _____
8. _____
9. Take _____
10. Ask probing _____
11. Listen _____
12. _____ for feelings, ideas, impressions
13. Listen for _____ clues
14. _____ and verify what the prospect is looking for
15. Sell _____ first, provide _____ last
16. Always Ask for the _____

So, you have done a great job of Listening and creating Interest. You have asked the prospect all sorts of good questions and you know what they need in their next apartment home. Now what? Step three in the phone sales process – building **CONVICTION**.

STEP THREE

Turn your prospects interest into _____.

Any time you have ever gotten an _____, you have convinced your customer.

What exactly does “convince” mean? _____

How do you convince your prospects? Get them to do it themselves.

It’s called the _____.

Every prospect who calls you, or visits your property in person, has a “checklist”. This is a list of features, amenities, aspects of the community that they need or want in order to make their decision. You must work through the customers check list by using a series of trial or “mini” closes.

What is a trial or “mini” close? _____

- ✓ *Do you think you'd like...*
- ✓ *Does it make sense to..*
- ✓ *Don't you agree...*
- ✓ *Isn't it about time that..*
- ✓ *Don't you feel that...*
- ✓ *Can you see the advantage of. ..*
- ✓ *Aren't you really excited about...*
- ✓ *Wouldn't you be happy to find...*
- ✓ *Aren't you happy to know...*
- ✓ *Can you see the benefit of. ..*
- ✓ *Isn't it worth considering...*
- ✓ *This is something you want, isn't it...*
- ✓ *Did you like the fact that...*



If a lot of these questions get you a big **YES**, you are close to getting a **YES** at the end of your call, an agreement to come and visit your community. That should always be your goal and is the sign of a successful call.

Part of getting conviction from your prospect is getting them to agree you have what they want. Verify it! Wouldn't this be perfect for you? Wouldn't you like that? That would fit in your budget, wouldn't it? If they have told you **YES** multiple times, they are telling themselves **YES** too. Yes builds **CONVICTION**.

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Aside from trial closes, you also build conviction by how you handle the second half of the phone call. They are interested and aware – now you need to convince your prospect that a move to your property would be a wise move for them.

- Make your features come alive by explaining benefits
- Nail down your key points and get them to agree with you
- Don't talk for too long!
- Don't be afraid to repeat crucial points
- Prove your claims with evidence or examples

Save them money, impact their lives by saving them time or frustration, provide them something they don't have now (washer/dryer connections, for instance). You should know what they have now from your good questions, so use this information to create Conviction in the mind of the prospect – YES! This is the place for me! This make sense, I don't need to keep looking when I have found home.

STEP FOUR

Use what you know and have learned about
your customer to make them
_____ a move.



You have to create a desire to make the move. Someone may have been aware and interested enough to call your community. From the advertising they have seen and the presentation you have given, they are now convinced that no better place exists for them. So you have to take it beyond just building and maintaining interest, and convincing your prospect. You have to create desire in the prospect. You have to figure out what they NEED.

“The salesman’s job is to persuade people to want what they already need,”

(E. St. Elmo Lewis)

You have to uncover a person’s **Buying Motive** to understand why they will go ahead with the appointment, or signing a lease with you.

What is a Buying Motive?

SOLO ACTIVITY:

BUYING MOTIVES



Think about what makes someone buy, or lease, an apartment home from you. What are some typical BUYING MOTIVES? Remember that buying motives tend to be personal, and not always obvious. Things like security, safety, quality of life, and financial reasons tend to factor into a prospects buying motives. Think of at least five typical buying motives that drive your prospects to lease from you.

Desire is created once you uncover a prospects buying motive(s). Ways to create this desire and bring about buying motives:

- Remind the prospect that he needs or wants the benefits of your community that you have outlined. Repeat to him or her the check boxes you have gotten – the yes's to various amenities that you know are important to them.
- Remind the prospect that your community can meet all of these needs, fill these voids.
- Paint a word picture of your prospect enjoying life at your community and taking full advantage of these benefits.

What makes people desire? You must use your phone tactics and closing skills to bring your prospect to the right conclusion – that you have what they want, it is a great deal and they need to lease from you *today*. That is DESIRE.



PHONE SCENARIO 1

Listen to this sample phone conversation and determine whether the leasing consultant understood the prospects buying motive.

STEP FIVE

You've made it through the four hard steps, now comes the easy part: _____.

What should be the goal of each phone call? An _____.

Turning the prospect into a resident of your community is your ultimate goal. Perhaps not just leasing over the phone but making the in-person appointment. You should be confident that a lot of your work has been done - the decision is made for the most part. You have their **ATTENTION** and have been laying the foundation throughout your phone conversation by getting them to agree you have the features they want, that they have significant **INTEREST**. Through your conversation, by the things they say and yes's they give you, you know they are **CONVINCED**, and once you uncover buying motives and show you understand these, now they have the **DESIRE** to move to your community. How can they say no to visiting you in person? So **CLOSE!**

Become familiar with a variety of different closes you can tailor to your personality and phone presentation. My **Close 'em!** class talks more in depth about individual closes to try, but some that are very successful on the phone are:

- **Summary or Wrap it Up!** – “I sure have enjoyed our conversation. I think you will really love it here at Park Forest and I am confident that Apartment 1811 will be perfect, considering all the things you were looking for. It has the east exposure on the 1st floor with the close proximity to parking, just as you requested. When do you want to come in to get this taken care of? I have appointments available this afternoon.”
- **Make It Theirs** – “Okay, so what all are we working with inside your apartment? I know that you needed the connections and a bigger kitchen, but what sort of dining furniture do you have? I want to be sure everything will work perfectly.”
- **Urgency** – “I only have one one-bedroom left on the lake with a fireplace. You said that was exactly what you were looking for and I'd hate for someone else to get this one. So did you want to come this afternoon to reserve it or this weekend?”
- **24 Hour Hold** – “I know you can't make it out to see us until tomorrow afternoon. I'd hate for someone else to nab that apartment, so I'll pencil you in for 24 hours to save that one for you. What time tomorrow works for you, 2:30 or 5:00?”
- **Counselor** – “It sounds like we have what you are looking for and I really want to take the pressure of this move off your shoulders. Why don't you come by and see me tomorrow so that we can get this taken care of.”
- **If I could, would you?** – “If I could get that apartment ready for you by the 18th, when you said you wanted to move, and get you new carpeting as well, would you lease that apartment? Great! What time this afternoon can you come in to see it and put down your deposit?”

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Remember that setting the appointment is the best use of your closing skills on the phone. You can lease apartments site unseen, it does happen, but not very often. So resist the urge for the hard close and instead focus your efforts on making a solid appointment that won't be forgotten.



PHONE SCENARIO 2

Listen carefully to this appointment setting call and determine what elements led to its' success.

Setting the Appointment

Saying yes to an appointment is the natural conclusion to your phone call. If they have said YES multiple times when you have used your trial closes, and you have done a good job of establishing rapport and understanding what their needs and buying motives are, it is only natural for them to come out to see you.

Get comfortable with **wrapping up the call**.

They have now said “yes” to you multiple times throughout your talk, they won't deny the chance to see the place now.

- “Great, Mr. Patel! I would like to invite you to visit our community and would be happy to show you your new apartment today, or is this weekend more convenient for you? Morning or afternoon? 1:00 or 3:30?”
- “Mrs. Herrera, it has been so nice chatting with you today and I am sure that you will find Gates at Forest Park will be ideal for you. We have a busy schedule around here and I want to be sure I can devote the right amount of time to your tour and questions. I have two appointments available for tomorrow, does AM or PM work with your schedule?”
- “Mr. Jenkins, we only have two first-floor one bedrooms left. I know you said you were busy today, but what time tomorrow works well for you to come out and see your new place?”

Give them an _____ / _____ choice, not a yes or no.

Finish the appointment setting properly

- get their phone number and e-mail address
- offer detailed directions to the community from their location
- ask if they have any additional questions or concerns
- Summarize the details for clarity.

GROUP ACTIVITY:

LISTEN TO A GOOD CALL



Choose two volunteers to read your phone call, start to finish. Listen carefully to the leasing consultant. What do you hear that makes this call “work”? What does the leasing consultant do that makes it a successful call? What could they have done differently?

THE HARD PART IS OVER!

If they have said yes to you and your community, yes to the appointment and to you, how can they say **NO** once you have them in person?

Remember the steps,

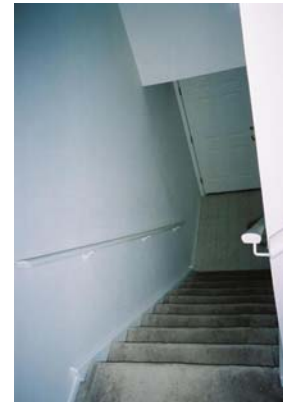
Attention

Interest

Conviction

Desire

Close



You must walk down the steps to get to the bottom of it – the lease. These five rules of selling will help you work through a sales call and generate walk-in traffic and signed leases. One note – keep in mind these 5 steps are somewhat flexible. A few can be combined, one or two passed over. But if you make it down the steps, the salesperson’s job is almost done. Almost.

DON'T WASTE THESE CALLS BECAUSE YOU ARE BUSY!



PHONE SCENARIO 3

Listen to this sample close and see what mistakes the leasing consultant made with the prospect.

Track Your Calls, Learn From Stats

What percentage of people who lease from you, have called you first?

_____ %

That's right! Three out of four people who lease an apartment with you have called you first. Remember that you have spent a lot of money to get your phone to ring, don't throw it out the window by blowing the call.

How long does the average prospect phone call last?

_____ **seconds or minutes**

How long does it take to say the average community greeting, for example:

"Hello and thank you for calling Park Forest Apartments – where we pledge quality and comfort. This is Mary Sunshine, how can I help you?"

_____ **seconds**

That means that nearly 1/5th of the phone call is spent on just the greeting! How is that doing your job of selling your community on the phone? Frequently, the phone call is speed through with little care or thought. The various call tracking services can help you determine whether this is going on with you, or your community, currently.



If you don't currently use either of the two call tracking services, Who's Calling and CallSource, try them out! See how long your calls are lasting! Which of your ad sources is generating the most interest? These services are well worth the investment and can be an eye-opener for you. Visit their websites to find out which may be right for you.

Be Prepared for Phone Calls

I hate it when I walk into a company and ask, "what do you have the new leasing consultant doing today?" "Oh, she's real green. We will probably just put her on the phones!" EEEK! What?

Some tools you need to be successful on each phone call:

- * Leasing Book – Answers to questions at your fingertips
- * Copies of each of your ads – Be "on the same page" with your caller!
- * Product Knowledge Workbook – Answers to the questions you'll get
- * Community Information – Be able to sell your neighborhood, proximity and conveniences as well as your property itself
- * Notepad and pen – write stuff down!

Basic Phone Etiquette is Essential

- * Ask for the prospect's name right up front and use it throughout the call
- * Be polite and respectful - Say please and thank you, sir and ma'am, yes and no instead of yep and nope!
- * Reflect a smile in your voice! Sound happy, interested, excited – it comes through the other end of the line
- * Don't rush! Take your time – they are worth it and so is what you have to say
- * If you must ask someone to hold, do it right!
- * Avoid jargon, slang and of course, profanity!

Practice! Role play! Find out what objections people have had and how they have been overcome. Learn from your coworkers and property manager.

Closing Site Unseen

Okay, so it does happen, but not too often. You can close people site unseen if you use your resources, your selling skills and the right sense of urgency.

- * Use online resources, your website or web ad to close over the phone
- * Know your advertisements and where to refer your callers
- * Try alternate ideas, like conference calls or web conferences
- * Create a believable sense of urgency
- * Create a sense of ease, taking care of the “problem” of finding their next home and allowing time for more important things.
- * Have tools in place to help you finish the closing, like an online application and credit card acceptance for the deposit and application fee.

SO, WHAT'S THE POINT?

A **large percentage of your business** will come from being successful on the phone. This is not a nuisance, a break in your routine. This is your job!

- * You can increase your closing ratio.
- * You can increase your income.
- * You can have less vacancies and less hassle.
- * You can fulfill the title of “leasing consultant”.



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