



WORKSHOP: EFFECTIVE FOLLOW UP

SESSION 3: THEY MADE A RESERVATION OR AN APPOINTMENT

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Kenny Pratt here. Thanks for joining me in this third of five sessions in the Effective Follow Up workshop. In this session we are going to talk about those close to ideal times when your prospective customer has put up money for a deposit or set an appointment for less than a week away.

I know you are busy, so I want to help you make the most of the time you spend with me today. So, if you are listening to the audio version, what I want you to do is to take a minute and grab a piece of paper. It will be much more efficient to take notes as you go. By taking notes and writing your ideas, you'll have to listen to the audio fewer times for it all to make sense.

If you are reading the written version of this session, then I would encourage you to take notes in the hefty margin.

YOU'RE NOT OUT OF THE WOODS

Just because you have a commitment in the form of a deposit, a reservation, or an appointment, you are not out of the woods. You don't have a signed rental agreement, so it's not time to relax. Your prospective customers will be driving around and they could be enticed by a new banner or sign on your competitor's property. A competitor might return an email or return a phone inquiry and call them and woo them away. They may already have an email or voicemail waiting for them right now that is offering a killer deal and they just haven't read it or listened to it yet.

LEARN FROM THE CUSTOMER WE STOLE

A great lesson can be learned from the customer one of my store managers stole from a competitor the other day.

Recently I was at one of my stores talking to a customer who had just finished renting a storage space. My on-site manager stole her away from a competitor.

You see, the customer, we'll call her Janet... So Janet was shopping around for storage on the internet on a Sunday. Unfortunately my stores are not open on Sunday, so her email inquiry was not responded to right away. However, my on-site manager replied to her first thing on Monday morning with an upbeat message offering some basic details about our location and inviting Janet to call or email with questions. Janet replied that she had already been contacted the day before (the day we were closed) by a competitor and had made other arrangements.

Thank you very much.

Well, my on-site manager is pretty awesome and was not deterred. She told Janet that we would love to have her business, that we were offering some pretty good move-in incentives on the size she was looking for, and that we would be glad to reimburse her for any reservation charges she may have already incurred. She asked Janet to consider us if she hadn't already moved into the storage space she reserved on Sunday.

The emails turned into a phone call from Janet and a deal was negotiated that had Janet moving into my location and not the competitors. All because my on-site manager was persistent and was willing to make a deal.

We rented the storage space to Janet on Tuesday afternoon. My competitor never knew what happened.

The moral of the story is that even when you think you have a commitment to rent, you are still vulnerable. Effective follow up will help you prevent this from happening.

CALL THE DAY BEFORE THE APPOINTMENT OR EXPECTED RENTAL

The guidance here is simple. Assuming your appointment or reservation is less than a week away, simply contact the prospect and let them know you are confirming your appointment or reservation. Confirming would sound something like...

"Hey Mary, this is Kenny at SuperDeluxe Storage. I'm just calling to confirm our appointment for tomorrow at 12:30 pm."

Or, alternatively if you don't have a specific appointment, but rather more of an approximate time you might say something like...

"Hi Mary, this is Kenny at SuperDeluxe Storage. I know you said you would be coming in the middle of this week, so I have you tentatively scheduled for Wednesday. I just want to confirm the day and figure out if you plan on coming in the morning or afternoon."

The subtle thing I want to make sure to point out is that in either case you are assuming that there is an appointment. Your whole attitude, demeanor, and tone of voice convey your confidence and your assumption that your prospect is going to honor the appointment. This is one key to making it feel friendly and not like an inquisition. This assumptive attitude also sends the message that their storage problem is solved and if they can't keep the appointment the next logical step is to reschedule rather than to reconsider and possibly go somewhere else.

YOU ARE SERVING THEM BY DOING THE REMINDING THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

If you think about it, you are doing an act of service when you do the reminding that needs to be done. Your prospective customer has a life, and sometimes life sends

unexpected stuff their way. Sometimes people forget about previous commitments. Things happen.

Even when your prospective customer knows in advance that they are going to miss your appointment, they may not call. There is a large part of the population that is not that considerate. Since they don't know you personally and they feel like you are there to serve them, they might not even feel like a courtesy call to you is necessary.

By calling them, and checking in you are staying on the top of their mind. If the appointment is going to be missed, this is a proactive way to discover if something has come up and to reschedule if necessary.

There are other people who are just plain nice and feel like it would be extremely rude to miss your appointment without advance warning. These people need a call from you for a different reason. Your follow up call will allow them to save face and reschedule. For this small group of people they may feel so bad after missing your appointment that they want to avoid you because they feel guilty. They may even decide to store someplace else rather than deal with a potentially awkward situation. Calling these people the day before the appointment and giving them a chance to reschedule is really just helping them feel good about you and about themselves.

WHAT IF THEY CAN'T MAKE THE APPOINTMENT?

What if they can't make the appointment? Let's talk about that for a minute. There will be times when you attempt to confirm the appointment and the person you are talking with will tell you that the time you were counting on will no longer work.

On one hand this is great news. This is great news because at least you know about it in advance.

Imagine your prospect has told you that you that they will be in at 1:30 on Thursday and so you put off taking your lunch and wait for them. 1:30 comes and goes and soon it's 1:45 and then it's 2:00. And now you are super hungry and a little miffed that you waited around for this prospect who didn't have the decency to tell you they weren't coming.

When you confirm the appointment you are, on one hand reminding your prospective customers of their commitment, and on the other, you are saving yourself frustration by discovering, in advance, when they are not going to keep their appointment.

So, all things considered, you are in a good position.

What you want to do at this point is take a step back in the process and work out a new day and time that will work better for your prospective customer.

Let's say, for example, that Mary has just told you that your appointment tomorrow is not going to work.

Your reply would sound something like, "Ok Mary, no problem. Let's just figure out a time that works better. Would a different time tomorrow work better for you or would you prefer a different day all together?"

Mary: "I think tomorrow is shot. I think it will have to be the day after tomorrow."

You: "Sounds good. What time works best for you?"

And there you go, you are on your way to establishing a new appointment. You are happy. Mary is happy. Most importantly your prospective customer feels even more committed because they just re-affirmed their commitment by rescheduling with you.

Not only that, but because you put forth the effort to confirm the appointment they are spared the embarrassment they may have felt if they stood you up without the courtesy of calling.

Remember, a reschedule creates a new appointment or rental day. You should follow the same process as before and follow up with the prospect the day before the new commitment. For example, let's say you call your prospective customer on Tuesday to confirm a Wednesday appointment. She can't keep that appointment and works with you to reschedule for Friday. Now you will be calendaring another follow up call on Thursday. Your call on Thursday will simply be to confirm the appointment on Friday.

HERE'S THE QUICK REVIEW

So let's summarize.

- Since you don't yet have the rental, you are not out of the woods.
- Confirming the day before is an act of service on behalf of your prospective customer.
- Call the day before the expected rental with an attitude that they will be renting with you and you are just confirming the timing.
- Reschedule when necessary.
- If the reschedule pushes the appointment back more than a day, plan to follow up the day before the rescheduled appointment.

Well that wraps up session 3. Glad you could join me. For a good refresher and to get the most out of this session, check out the Fast Action Workbook.

Up next we build on what we covered in this session when we look in more detail at how to handle those times when the prospective customer has indicated their desire to rent from you, but they don't need the space for a week or more. We'll cover how to

keep them engaged and committed to renting from you over a longer period of time that may span weeks or sometimes months.

So, thanks for joining me. I'm Kenny Pratt, signing off until next time.