



WORKSHOP: EFFECTIVE FOLLOW UP

SESSION 5: MULTIPLE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

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Kenny Pratt here. Thanks for joining me in this fifth of five sessions in the Effective Follow Up workshop. In this session we are going to talk about how to use additional communication channels, like voicemail, email, and text messages to facilitate your follow up efforts.

This is going to be a lengthy session. I'm just warning you that we have a lot of ground to cover.

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. You've heard me say this in every session because it is the truth. 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 transcript of this session, then I would encourage you to take notes in the hefty margin.

OK, NOW THAT YOU ARE SETTLED IN, LET'S ROCK THIS THING

FOLLOW UP IS MORE THAN A PHONE CALL

To keep things as simple as possible in sessions two, three, and four, I purposely left out the detail we will cover here about using voicemail, email, and text messages to augment your efforts.

So, in this final session we will cover voicemail, email, and text messaging. We will look at the overarching recommendations regarding these communication channels and then relate them back to one or more of the three scenarios we covered in sessions two, three, and four.

MIXING IN VOICEMAIL

It's a given that your attempts to follow up over the phone will not always result in an immediate conversation. So let's talk for a minute about voicemail. Some people are hesitant to leave a voicemail because they don't know what to say. Others leave horrendous voicemail that actually discourages people from calling back.

When attempting to follow up by phone, I generally recommend that you leave a message. It lets the prospect know you are trying to contact them, and it is the professional thing to do. Calling repeatedly and never leaving a message runs the risk of coming across as very insecure at best, or as a stalker at worst.

Here's a common scenario... you have a prospective customer who is shopping around and you offer to call him later with a better deal like we outlined in session 2. You call back later that day to let the prospect know about the great deal you have for them and to see what they found with your competitors. They don't answer. Now what?

VOICEMAIL SPECIFICS – WHEN THE PROSPECT IS STILL SHOPPING

So, let's talk about the specifics of the message you leave when your prospect is still shopping and you are trying to intercept them before their decision deadline. Let's assume you used the better deal tactic we outlined in session two and you have permission to follow up. In this case, your voice message will sound something like this:

"Hi Jaime, this is Kenny from SuperDeluxe Storage. We talked earlier today when you were shopping around and I'm just getting back with you like you asked. I have great news. I got approval for a fantastic deal. Please call me and we can go over the details. I will be available until six tonight and I will be returning tomorrow morning at nine am. My number is 916-555-1212. Again that's 916-555-1212. Talk to you soon."

So let's break down the message into its parts so that even if you are going to say things differently, you can make sure you have all of the pieces.

- First, you are going to remind them who you are. ("Hi Jaime, this is Kenny from SuperDeluxe Storage.)
- Second, remind them that *they asked you* to call them. (We talked earlier today when you were shopping around and I'm just getting back with you like you asked.)
- Third, let them know you were able to get them a great deal. (I have great news. I got approval for a fantastic deal.)
- Fourth, ask them to call you. (Please call me and we can go over the details.)
- Fifth, let them know when you will be available. (I will be available until six tonight and I will be returning tomorrow morning at 9am.)
- Sixth, leave your phone number slowly. (My number is 916-555-1212.)
- Lastly, repeat your number a second time. (Again that's 916-555-1212. Talk to you soon.) Repeating your number may sound awkward to you but that's only because you are familiar with your number. Trust me on this one, you will be making it easier for your prospect to return your call, and it's always a good idea to make it easy for your prospect to do what you want them to do.

Alternatively, if you used the "meet or beat" approach outlined in session 2 you would say something like:

"Hi Jaime, this is Kenny from Super Duper Storage. We talked earlier today when you were shopping around and I'm just getting back with you. I'm ready when you

are to blast the competition's prices. I'll try again a little later. I will be available until six tonight and I will be returning tomorrow morning at 9 am. You can reach me at 916-555-1212. That's 916-555-1212. Talk to you soon."

Since you are trying to elicit a response from the prospect, i.e. a call back. I purposely used evocative language like "blast the competition's prices." or "approval for a fantastic deal". This is the final hour when your prospect is making buying decisions. This may not be your natural tendency, but I'm asking you to stretch a little and move beyond logic and put a foot in the realm of emotion. This is the time to pull out the stops so that you can reconnect with them before it's too late.

VOICEMAIL SPECIFICS – WHEN THEY MADE A RESERVATION

When your prospect has made a reservation within a week's time, you are generally calling to confirm the appointment. In this scenario an effective voicemail would sound something like this:

"Hi Sam, this is Kenny from Super Safe Storage. I'm calling to confirm our appointment for tomorrow at 3pm. I have the time set aside for you. Will you please call me to confirm that tomorrow at three will work for you or to let me know you would like to reschedule. I will be available until six tonight and I will be returning tomorrow morning at 9 am. Please call me at 916-555-1212. One more time, that's 916-555-1212. Talk to you soon."

So let's break down this message into its parts so that you'll know how it is put together.

- First, remind them who you are. (Hi Sam, this is Kenny from Super Safe Storage.)
- Second, tell them you are calling to confirm your appointment, and
- Third, remind them when you have them scheduled. (I'm calling to confirm our appointment for tomorrow at 3pm.)
- Fourth, let them know you have the time set aside for them. It makes them feel like you have done something for them and they should reciprocate or by honoring the appointment or by giving you a courtesy call to reschedule. (I have the time set aside for you.)
- Fifth, ask them to call you to verify the appointment or to reschedule. (Will you please call me to confirm that tomorrow at three will work for you or to let me know you would like to reschedule.)
- Sixth, let them know when you will be available. (I will be available until six tonight and I will be returning tomorrow morning at 9am.)
- Seventh, leave your phone number slowly. (You can reach me at 916-555-1212.)

- Lastly, repeat your number a second time. (One more time, that's 916-555-1212. Talk to you soon.)

VOICEMAIL SPECIFICS – WHEN YOU ARE TRYING TO STAY IN TOUCH

When you are trying to stay in touch with a prospect who has indicated that their need for storage is more than a week away, you will either be trying to keep them engaged, or you may be attempting to firm up a tentative appointment.

A voicemail message in this scenario would sound something like this:

Hi Mrs. Smith, this is Jimmy from Massive Fortress Storage. I'm calling let you know that we started a special where we are giving away a few free boxes to new customers. I thought you might want to know, because I thought you might be in the middle of packing. I also want to firm up our tentative appointment for next week. Please give me a call. I will be available until six tonight and then again starting at nine tomorrow morning. I look forward to talking. My number is 916-555-1212. Again that is 916-555-1212. Talk to you soon.

In this case, let's walk through the basic template:

- First, remind them who you are. (Hi Mrs. Smith, this is Jimmy from Massive Fortress Storage.)
- Second, tell them why you are calling. I outlined six reasons you might want to call to stay in touch in session four. (I'm calling let you know that we started a special where we are giving away a few free boxes to new customers. I thought you might want to know, because I thought you might be in the middle of packing.)
- Let them know you are trying to firm up your upcoming appointment if appropriate. (I also want to firm up our tentative appointment for next week.)
- Fourth, ask them to call you. (Please give me a call.)
- Fifth, let them know when you will be available. (I will be available until six tonight and then again starting at 9 tomorrow morning.)
- Sixth, leave your phone number slowly. (My number is 916-555-1212.)
- Lastly, repeat your number a second time. (Again that is 916-555-1212. Talk to you soon.)

ADDITIONAL VOICEMAIL MESSAGES BEYOND THE FIRST

So we went through some examples of some voicemail messages that you might leave for a prospect in various situations. So, now what?

If your prospective customer is still shopping, then now is not the time to give up and just wait for a return phone call. Yes, there is a time to just be patient and wait, but we haven't made it that far yet.

When your prospect is still shopping, I recommend that you call on the appointed follow up day and for two consecutive days thereafter. Leave a message each time because it is more professional, is less stalker-like, and is more effective at putting pressure on the prospect to call you back.

These messages would sound a lot like the original message you left them plus a reason for the additional call. For example: "Hi Jaime, this is Kenny from SuperDeluxe storage following up on our conversation yesterday. I'm just trying you this morning (or afternoon) to see if this is a better time to talk. You have a great deal waiting for you here. I'll try you again this afternoon (or tomorrow as the case may be). In the mean time you can reach me at 916-555-1212. Again, that's 916-555-1212. Talk to you soon."

You may think that calling for two days after the initial follow up attempt is a lot. And you are right, it is. It would be too much if you didn't get their permission to call them. This level of frequency really hinges on the permission they gave you in the initial call. The wonderful thing is that if you are getting their permission to follow-up and you are persistently leaving messages like I'm recommending here, you probably won't need to call them for two full days.

If you have called them for two consecutive days and have left messages, and have yet to get a call back, it's time to give them a break. A good rule of thumb is to lay off until the day before their storage deadline or one week after your last attempt, whichever is sooner. If their need for storage is still several weeks away then stick with your once a week schedule. This will help you stay on their radar if they are still in decision making mode, without being annoying.

This tactic of calling several times can be useful even if your prospective customer seems more committed. There are times when you really do want a response from them. For example, you might still have only a vague sense of their timing for moving forward and now that their date needed is approaching you'd like to reinforce their commitment by working with them to make more specific plans. Leaving multiple messages is a way to gently push them toward returning your call.

LIGHT AND FRIENDLY DEMEANOR

So you may be making several follow up attempts, and sometimes despite your best efforts some people may ignore you and that can be frustrating. But your frustration must never show. Your attitude during follow up should always be light and friendly. Your voice or demeanor should never come across as angry or annoyed that the prospect hasn't returned your call. You should have the mindset that you are following up for their benefit, to make their life easier, to save them the hassle of having to contact you. You want them to call you back because you want their business, but you want them to feel like you are helping them on their terms.

MIXING IN EMAIL

Now it is time to mix in email. Email and voicemail make up the dynamic duo of follow up. Email is a great way to augment your attempts at communicating by phone.

The easiest way to use email is to simply mirror your voice messages. Simply restate the purpose of your voice message in your email. In some situations, like when you are simply confirming an appointment or firming up an appointment, a reply email from your prospect may be even better than a phone call.

A confirmation email might sound something like this:

Subject: Please confirm our appointment on Saturday

Body: Hi Jaime,

It's me, Kenny, from Fantabulous Self Storage. I know I left you a voice message, but I thought I would try email as well just in case you might prefer communicating this way. (By framing the email as an attempt to communicate in whatever format is easiest for the prospect, the email comes across as helpful to the prospect rather than as a selfish attempt to reach them and sell them something.)

(Continuing the email...) I have set aside some time for you at 11:00 on Saturday morning. Will you please confirm that 11 still works for you, or propose a different time if you need to reschedule.

You can reach me at 916-555-1212, or via reply email. We are open 9-6 Monday through Saturday.

Looking forward to meeting you,

Kenny

A follow up email that is confirming an appointment is pretty straight forward. However, when your prospect is still shopping around and you have used the “better deal” or the “meet or beat” approaches then you are probably better off if you can move the conversation from email back to the phone so that you can hear and respond in real-time to their reaction to your offer.

An example follow up email to someone who is shopping looks something like this

Subject: A better deal on your storage unit

Body: Hi Jaime,

I know I left you a voice message, but I thought I would try email as well in case you might prefer communicating this way.

Like I mentioned, I checked with my boss (or coworker) to see if we could do even better than the pricing we discussed earlier today. I’m happy to say we can. What time can we get together on the phone so I can go over the options? (Because I want them to call me, I’m specifically suggesting a call back, and I’m purposely not giving them all of the details. I’m implying a better deal is waiting, but to take advantage of it I need to know their preferences. I’m suggesting in a subtle way that the best next step is for them to call or visit.)

(So we left off with...) What time can we get together on the phone so I can go over the options? (And then continuing...) Or, if you prefer, you are welcome to come down to the store and we will go over the details in person and you will have a chance to take a look around and confirm that our location will work well for you. (Again, I’m trying to suggest a conversation, rather than an email).

You can reach me at 916-555-1212, or via reply email. We are open from 9am-6pm Monday through Saturday.

Looking forward to working with you.

Warm regards,
Kenny

GETTING THE EMAIL ADDRESS

If you are going to follow up via email, you will need your prospect's email address, so let’s talk about how you are going to get it.

Getting the prospect's email address is usually a matter of asking. You have two options that will improve your chances of getting a "yes".

⌂ Psst... remember to take great notes in the margin

1. Give them something of value that requires an email address. This is the preferred method.

One way to do this is to offer an email-only special. Because you may not know what you are competing against when it comes to pricing and move-in specials, I recommend you go with something more generic for you email special that could be combined with another move-in incentive without causing problems. A 10% discount on boxes and moving supplies works well in situations like this.

Another option is to create a tip sheet that delivers insider secrets to renting and packing a storage space. You might even include links to the best packing tutorial videos on YouTube. Offer to send them your tip sheet if they will give you their email address.

2. If you can't give anything away, the next best thing is to simply ask with confidence. For example you might say, "I have your phone number. Let me get your email address and that way we can stay in touch even if a phone call becomes inconvenient."

If you are not going to offer a discount or some other ethical bribe in exchange for the email, I cannot stress enough how important your attitude and confidence will be in getting the prospect to give you the email address you are after. You want them to feel like everyone gives you an email address. Timidity is your worst enemy here. Bold is ok. Funny is ok. Tentative and hesitant is not going to work.

A weak approach would sound something like, "Would you like to give me your email address?" Or, "If it's ok, can I also have your email?"

A confident approach sounds more like: "Let me take down your email too because sometimes I have details that are easiest to receive via email."

Or, "Let me get your email and I'll send you a summary of the pricing and move-in discount we discussed."

Or, "Let me get your email and I will send you a confirmation of your reservation."

Like I mentioned, offering something in return for the email address is the preferred method, but If you can't go that route, then ask in a way that assumes you are going to get it.

MIXING IN TEXT MESSAGES

An alternative to voicemail and email is to try text messaging. There are many people who ignore their voice messages for days at a time, but are very in tune and responsive to text messages.

A word of caution about text messages. Many people feel like text messages are much more intimate than email or voicemail and may find unwanted text messages more intrusive than an unwelcome voice message or email message.

Because the text messages have more risk, it is doubly important that you have permission to follow up before you start shooting out text messages.

If you are concerned whether following up via text message is a good idea, you can never go wrong by asking your prospective customer for their explicit permission. At the same time you get permission to follow up in general, you can also ask for permission to send an email or text message.

Asking for that permission would sound something like, "I'll call you this afternoon, but if for some reason I miss you would you prefer I leave you a voice message or send you a text message instead?"

So, I recommend that you get permission to send a text messages. I also recommend that when you send text messages you spell out whole words and avoid abbreviations. If you send a lot of text messages, the abbreviations that may seem commonplace to you may not be commonplace to your prospect. So, the safe way to go is to spell out the whole word and avoid coming across as unprofessional.

Since you only have 160 characters, you are probably best off trying to move the conversation back to a phone call. If you are working with a shopper, you can do that with a message like this:

"This is Kenny from Super Storage. I got approval for a better deal. Call me at 555-1212 and we'll work out details."

Alternatively, you might simply be confirming an appointment. You could do that with a message like this:

"This is Kenny from Super Storage. Reminding you of our appointment tomorrow at 1pm. Please call me at 555-1212 if you need to reschedule."

HERE'S THE QUICK REVIEW

We have covered a boat-load of details about voicemail, email, and text messages in this session, so let's summarize the main points.

- Your attempts to follow up over the phone will not always result in an immediate conversation.
- Voicemail and email are an effective combination. They are like caffeine and a nap. Both are effective, but they work best together.

- You can use voicemail to follow up with shoppers by letting them know you got approval for a better deal or by encouraging them to take you up on your offer to beat the competitors' prices.
- If you are working with a prospective customer who is shopping, you want to draw them back into a conversation.
- You can use voicemail to confirm appointments and offer an opportunity to reschedule.
- You can use voicemail to stay in touch with prospects who have a need for storage more than a week away.
- You may have to leave more than one voicemail message before you get a call back. This is ok if you arranged to have permission to follow up during your initial contact with the prospective customer. Don't shy away from leaving more than one message.
- Keep your attitude and tone of voice light and friendly.
- Email can be sent in combination with voicemail.
- The reason for your email can be the same as the reason for your voicemail. You are just giving your prospective customer an opportunity to communicate in the manner that is most convenient for them.
- Use an ethical bribe or ask with confidence in order to get prospective customer's email address.
- Text messaging can be powerful because it is a more intimate form of communication.
- The intimacy is a double edged sword and can be perceived as intrusive. Your best bet is to ask permission to send a text message before following up with text messages.
- Since communicating via text message is limited to 160 characters, it is recommended that you try to move the conversation back to a phone or in person conversation.

Phew. We made it. That wraps up session 5. As usual, check out the Fast Action Workbook in the resources section of this session. The Fast Action Workbook is an easy way to review the ground we have covered. It is also an easy way to begin thinking things through and figuring out how you are going to apply them at your location.

Also, if you are the type of person who wants to go back and review the sample voicemail, email, or text messages, you can find them easily in the written version of this session. I find that to be more efficient than trying to find the right spot for review in the audio version.

Up next. You. You're up next. It's time for you to put to work all of the good stuff we have covered in these five sessions. You are going to do awesome stuff.

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