

# THE POWER

MAKING THE MOST OF STRONG



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Working with builders and sales professionals over the past eight years, I've listened to thousands of phone calls. Who hasn't been greeted with, "This call may be recorded for training purposes"? Well, I actually get to listen to those recordings and evaluate them with sales professionals.

After hearing so many of them, I've come to recognize common conversation patterns, as well as oversights and missed opportunities.

By their very nature, discovery calls and email exchanges with prospects are different from conversing face to face. So, to create an awesome experience for prospects on the phone or via email, the rules of

engagement need to be a bit different.

In coaching sales specialists, the basics are always important: Get the prospect's name at the beginning of the call, ask the appropriate qualifying questions, maintain high energy, ask for an appointment, and overcome objections. But it's also important to coach in a way that moves the sales specialist to a level beyond the basics. The best way to do that is by demonstrating how to build rapport and tap into the emotion of the story, or the "why." This aspect of engagement is powerful, memorable—and often missed during discovery calls and in email questions. It's not just the prospect's story to discover; there's our own story to share.

## THE CUSTOMER STORY

The customer's story is the most important. It is important to understand who the prospects are, why they called, and what

# OF STORY

LEADS MEANS SHARING A CLEAR, SUCCINCT NARRATIVE

matters to them. The story here is their motivation; the “why” behind their quest. While sales specialists won’t normally spend a lot of time on a call, taking a few critical seconds to show interest in each prospect’s story will set that salesperson apart from anyone else with whom the prospect speaks. It’s worth encouraging the sales specialist to simply slow down and ask different questions. Doing so will often get prospects to open up and share the real reason why they’re reaching out. Open-ended questions such as: “What prompted you to call today?” or asking: “Tell me what is most important to you in your next home,” or “Describe your dream home,” will encourage prospects to reveal more about their story.

## THE BUILDER STORY

While it’s essential to keep your focus on the prospective customer, don’t forget about your builder story. Remember, the prospect called you for a reason. Purchasing a home is a big deal, so don’t miss the opportunity to share what makes your organization different. Without practice, many sales professionals will forget this part. They often get so caught up in answering a prospect’s questions that they forget to weave into the conversation what makes their builder different.

Step One in sharing the builder story is to make sure you have one. Develop your story by identifying and incorporating three things that set you apart from other builders, and, make sure you can tell that story in less than 30 seconds. This 30 seconds will take careful preparation and practice. But how do you tell the story without just blurting it out? Step Two involves asking the simple question, “Are you familiar with Best Builder in the World?” Their answer allows you to share the story or enhance what they already know about it.

## THE STORY OF NEW

This one is crucial. A salesperson working in the new-home industry for any amount of time will often start to assume that everyone understands the benefits of building a new home. Keep in mind that while this might be the thousandth time that you’ve explained the benefits of owning a new home versus an existing one, it could be the prospect’s first time hearing that message. Seventy-five to 80 percent of homes sold in

any market are existing, so in all likelihood, that is what the prospect knows and understands.

Ask the simple question: “Have you built a new home before?” The response will tell you how much of the “story of new” to share. “The story of new” could be the first time to introduce the prospect to energy efficiency, HERS ratings, money savings, and personalization. Take it to the next level and talk about value appreciation, indoor air quality, and how much easier it will be to sell your home when the time comes.

## THE COMMUNITY STORY

This last story is often overlooked. Homebuyers typically shop by area first and then by price, in order to narrow down choices to a short list of communities. You might be the best builder in the world and have the best homes, but if prospects don’t get excited about the community, they won’t tap into the emotion of place. By place, I’m moving beyond the physical home and getting to the heart of what it is like to live in the community.

The good news is that home builders have the competitive advantage. Most new developments are planned communities with parks, trails, pools, a clubhouse, playgrounds, ponds, and more. Tell the story of what it’s like to live in, play in, and drive in your community. Make sure you share the story of the families moving in. Many people buying a home from you may be new to the area. Talk about the community events, how decked out the neighborhood gets for celebrating the 4th of July and for trick or treating at Halloween. The sense of place taps into our sense of wanting to find where home is: It’s what most prospective homebuyers really care about.

A sales specialist may not be able to get all of this into that seven-minute call, all the while answering questions and pointing the prospect in the right direction. But if the pacing of the call is established early on, adding a few minutes to touch on points that many others overlook will feel natural, not forced. Listening to the prospect’s story and sharing yours creates a lasting impression that will help to win the sale. **PB**

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