NuGrowth SaaS
Your virtual selling machine

PHONE PROSPECTING

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Intro

We've heard the rumors, but those in sales and business development know the truth: the phone call is not dead.

Though young sales professionals may fear the phone, the fact remains phone conversation is, was, and always will be, an indispensable part of the selling process. Across the majority of business-to-business sales, positive conversations are one of the greatest predictors of sales success.

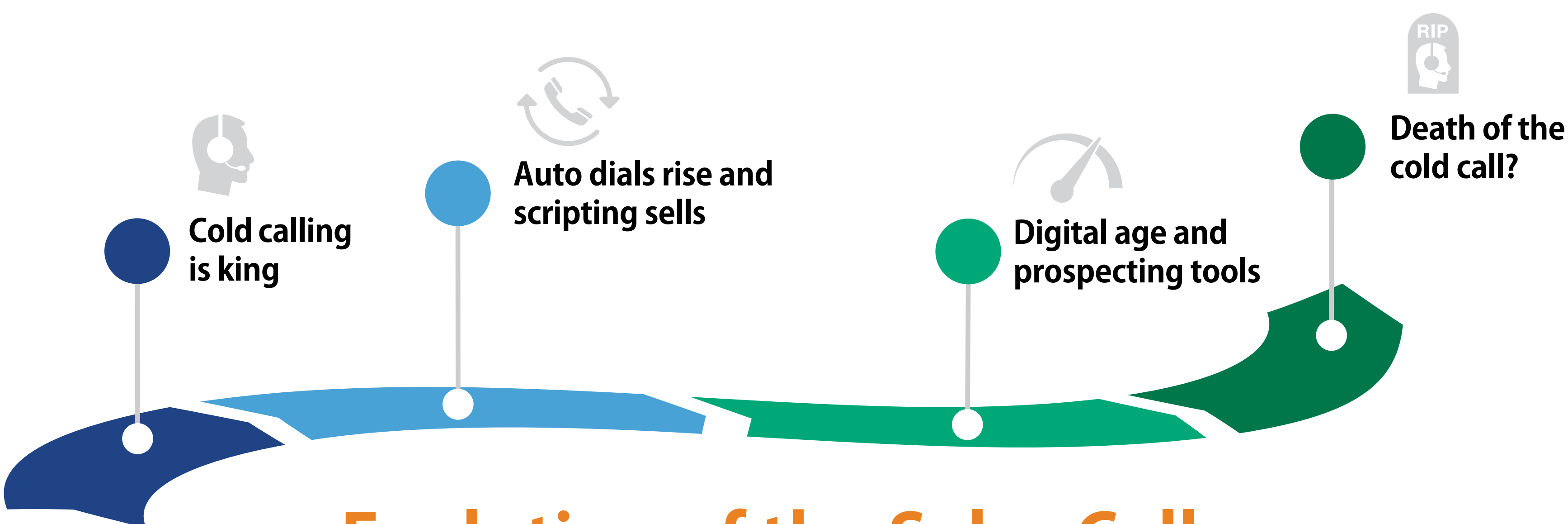
In this eGuide, we'll provide some indispensable and timeless advice on how best to work the almighty phone call to your advantage—transforming your sales prospecting from old-school to ageless.

The Phone Got a Bad Name. But...

In the old days of sales, cold calling was just that—cold. Reps had to pick up the phone knowing no more than the prospect's name, hoping to make a connection. Quantity became critical, and quality dropped.

Jump forward a few years. Auto-dialers came into vogue. Sales managers put out robo-dial "scripts for dummies." A belief in "the script is what sells" prevailed. Product features and benefits were the rage, and always the first thing out of a rep's mouth.

No wonder cold calling got a bad name.



Evolution of the Sales Call

Introductory Calling is Alive and Well.

But it is not really the call itself that is the problem.

A call by any other name is still a call.

It's the way you approach that call that makes the difference.

Rather than a random pitch tossed out on a wing and a prayer, true sales professionals know that their first call should be treated as an informed introduction—a **targeted, sincere, and intelligent** attempt to start a relationship with someone that could truly benefit from your services.

Advance Intelligence = Informed Introductions

Thanks to the digital revolution, there's no excuse to ever go into an introductory call "cold." Ever.

We now have more tools than ever to enable a layer of reconnaissance previously only dreamed about.

A simple Google search yields hundreds of results and social media makes sharing about business interests easy.

Amidst it all, lead scoring software, CRMs, and marketing integration systems yield targeted readouts on prospects' past behavior and predicted future actions.

Making the Most of the Introductory Call

So it's not a cold call, it's an introductory call. If that's a given, then how do we make most of every one that we make?

There are four key areas every sales professional must focus on to gain the most impact from their introductory calls.

Before the Call:
Setting the Stage

During the Call:
The Performance

After the Call:
The Review

Ongoing:
Analysis and Improvement

Before the Call: Setting the Stage

A successful sales call starts with three elements: **preliminary research, preparation,** and **practice**.

It's essential to gain adequate background data before calling your prospect: they'll expect it.

Once you've done your research, use the tools you have to customize your pitch.

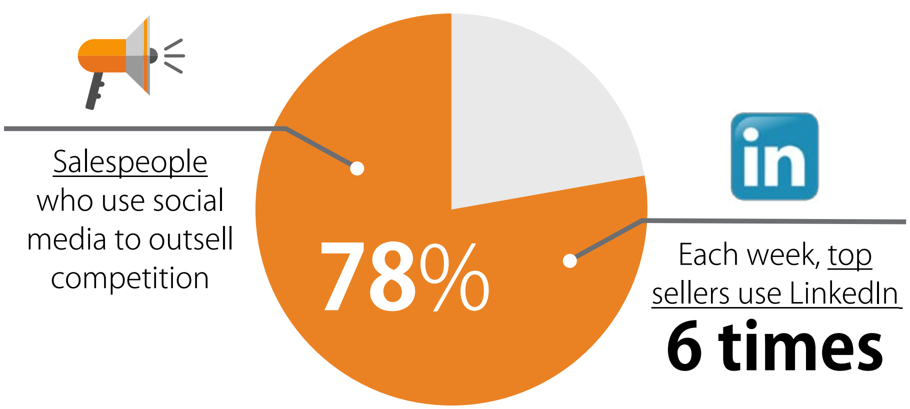
Finally, practice makes perfect! Keep at it until you've internalized what you'll say, ensuring your conversation with flow naturally *and* achieve its goal: sales conversion.

Do Your Research

Get to know your prospect…

- ✓ Look them up on social media
- ✓ Check out their LinkedIn profile
- ✓ Talk with clients connected to them
- ✓ Use sales tools to **qualify your lead**

The key is to feel like you know the prospect before talking with them, and be sure they're a fit for your services.



- **Create buyer personas:** hit on buyer pain points and how your product can address them directly.
- **Utilize your CRM:** get a process for entering and extracting information and stick to it.

▶ Successful sales reps are **20**% more likely to integrate their CRM in sales than their low-performing counterparts

- **Work with marketing:** your marketing team has the data you need to see what your prospects want.

▶ **63**% of companies that are outgrowing their competitors use marketing automation

Use Your CRM

Your CRM should be a wealth of information. Use it. How many calls does your company have in to the organization? What marketing assets have they interacted with? How often? Any recurrent content themes? Use lead score history and marketing automation data; this will give a clearer picture of their interests.

If the CRM is a bust, go outside it…and get the data back in. Know their website, your connections, and everything in between.

Research does not go to waste.

> It is critical to have a basic understanding of why an individual or organization could benefit from your product or service. The initial discovery process is very important to building a professional relationship.
>
> —Greg Tillar, CEO, NuGrowth Solutions

Script Your Call

Scripts are critical if only to build confidence and improve your delivery. Write one or two. Practice them. Know seven ways to say the same thing. Focus on the following elements for success:

- Build in space to tailor to industry and/or organization
- Create pathways depending on how the prospect responds
- Have a line of questioning that gets to the heart of the prospect's needs
- Emphasize the one element your company has that no one can compete with
- Edit often, updating after successful and unsuccessful calls

When scripting, keep in mind basic principles of selling. These guiding forces—such as "sales is relationship-building"—are the foundations of your business. Build these into your scripts for consistency and impact.

> The words on the page will change based on the sales rep that uses them—but the principles will always be conveyed regardless of the individual's choice of words.
>
> —Kyle Tillar, VP of SaaS, NuGrowth Solutions

Some other resources:

http://www.profitbuilders.com/cold-calling-script.php

http://fusionperformance.com/education-centre/how-script-introduction-call

Practice, Practice, Practice

It bears repeating this three times—knowing your pitch inside and out is critical. Practice your script with a coach, manager, or peer. The best salespeople did not get to where they are alone: it is through the continual **feedback of mentors** that they were able to perfect their craft.

Practice again…then practice again. Each time you'll become more familiar, and catch something new to say (or not say).

Prepare to be uncomfortable. This is an introductory call; it won't be easy. You're starting a new relationship each time, so it will be at bit awkward at first.

Then pick up the phone, and get after it!

Sales teams with deal-specific coaching report a **14**% shorter average sales cycle

45% of companies say their reps need guidance in prioritizing accounts

Training increases sales on an average of **50**% per rep

During the Call: The Performance

Once you've got your prospect on the line, the real work starts. Your preparation needs to come into action. You know your prospect, you've internalized your script, and you're ready to hit this one out of the park.

Your goal while on the call is the get to know even more about your prospect. This means asking questions, then shutting up and letting ***them*** talk. Keep the conversation going, and make it natural. This is where your practice comes in to play. Knowing your script well means you always have something to say, and you know when to say it.

Focus on the Call

Make the call your number one priority. Close your office door, and remove any distractions. Ideally, you should call from a quiet place. Many sales reps are tempted to make their calls on the go—don't!

Multitasking is your enemy. Don't worry about that email coming through, just the call. It can be tempting to start adding in information about your prospect to your CRM or writing out your plan for the next steps. This is important—but it can wait!

People can tell when you're not fully listening.

"Stay in the moment, listen to understand and give and earn respect.

—Greg Tillar, CEO, NuGrowth Solutions

Deliver the Introductory Info

Your first lines are what keep your prospect from hanging up. Let them know why they should stay on the line. The best way to do so is by giving them the essential info: who you are and why they should talk to you.

You've worked on your script, this is generally the right place to use it.

Introduce yourself, describing who you are, why you're calling and what you hope to accomplish. This elevator-speech-type intro should be delivered in 10 seconds or less. An effective introduction sets the platform for the call, and ensures the prospect you aren't wasting their time.

But guess what…every introduction will be different. You will get thrown off script. So make the most of your time spent practicing and stay in the moment.

Intro Tips

#1 **Slow down.** Don't talk too fast or try and cram everything into one statement.

#2 **Be concise.** Who you are, where you're from, and the reason for your call.

#3 **Be flexible.** Gauge their tone and adjust tempo and message.

#4 **Don't sell.** Start a relationship.

#5 **Don't pre-judge the call.** If you're defeated before you call, your intro will suffer greatly.

Personify Your Company

People buy from people. Once you've internalized your script, throw it away. Be genuine in your delivery. Believe in your product and your company, and let that be your driving force.

Believe in your company and what you're selling. People can tell when you're being genuine and when you're not. Trust in your training, and know you are connecting someone with something they need. Think of your conversation less as sales and more as serving needs.

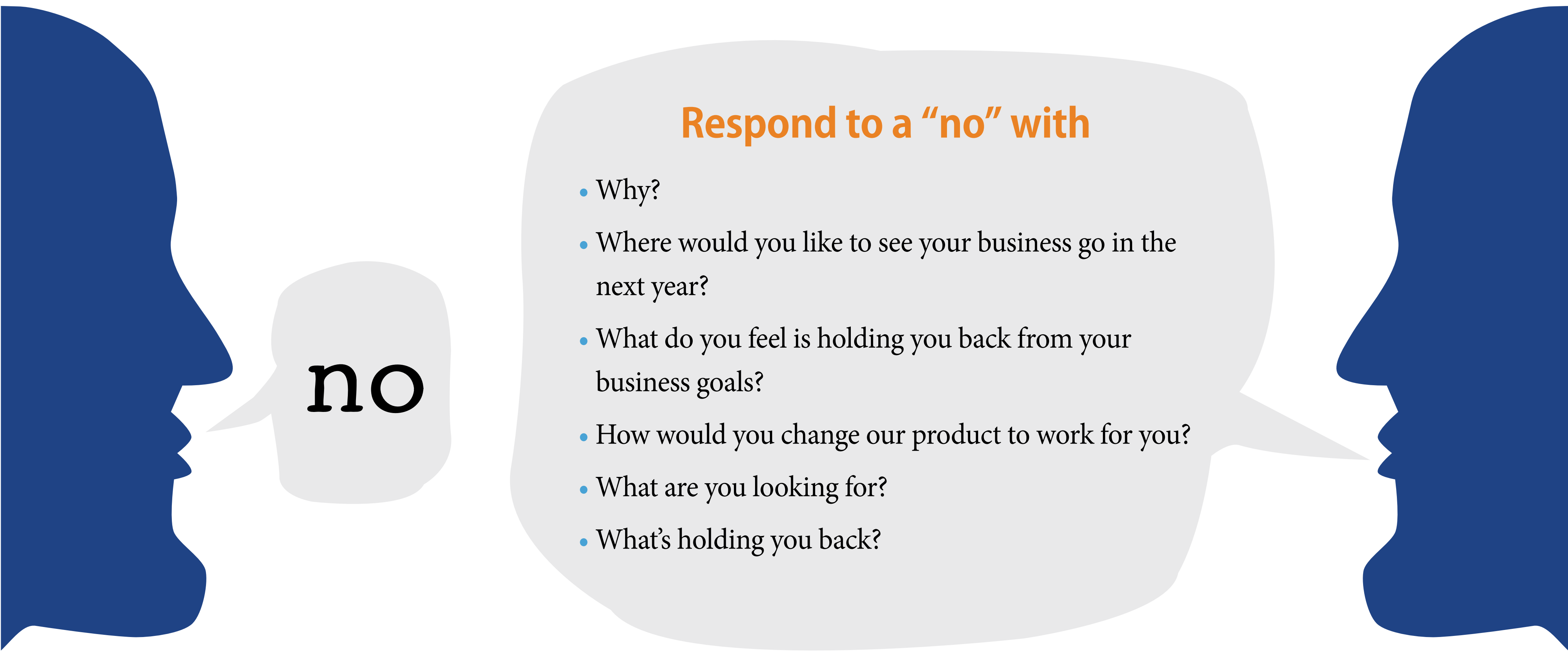
Winning Prospects Over

- **Use their name often**—this helps you remember their name and shows you view them as an individual, not a faceless sale.
- **Smile**—this simple act makes a difference in your self-confidence and the way you are perceived.
- **Ask questions**—this shows the caller you are interested and care about what they have to say.
- **Take a pause**—give your prospect a moment to think and respond, showing them you value their input.

Counter the "No" With Discovery

We've all heard "don't take no for an answer," but *how* you respond to that "no" is just as important. Shift the conversation with questions.

Ask questions to find out why the prospect is backing away. These questions will keep you on the phone, increasing your chances of a follow-up call or meeting. And, most importantly, you'll gather relevant information you can effectively use in future discussions.



Respond to a "no" with

- Why?
- Where would you like to see your business go in the next year?
- What do you feel is holding you back from your business goals?
- How would you change our product to work for you?
- What are you looking for?
- What's holding you back?

After the Call: The Review

Feeling good about your conversation? The real work starts once you hang up. The information you gained from your call builds your prospect profile. Use this knowledge in your follow-up to build momentum.

But what if the call felt like a flop? What you do next can change the trajectory of your interaction. Don't get down on yourself. The only sure way to lose a sale is to give up. Seek the advice of colleagues and mentors, and get back on the phone.

Document Everything

As soon as you hang up, write down everything you can remember. Jot down what you did, the prospect's responses, the time of day you called, and other relevant factors.

Include anecdotes. The "in between" parts in your conversation can provide a wealth of information on the prospect's values. A side comment about frustrations with complex user instructions tells you ease of use is important. Pay attention to these small cues.

Don't be afraid to include any personal information you gather too. It goes a long way to building rapport in future calls.

Ensure these notes are put to good use. Record everything in your CRM to help build a picture of this potential buyer. This info will help you further qualify your leads.

80% of sales require five follow-up calls

44% of reps give up after the first follow up

> Sales is a process of keeping everyone on the same page and pointed towards a decision. If you can't document what you've done, it's hard to point toward where you're going together.
>
> —Paul Fuller, President, NuGrowth Digital

Send a Quick Thank You

A quality conversation deserves a quality follow up. Create an email template so you can follow up promptly, but ensure you customize it before you hit send. Include specific details from your conversation and an invitation to your next steps.

Keep the conversation moving—if you haven't heard back for a few days after your follow up, follow up again. Remain polite, but stay consistent.

SAMPLE EMAIL

Hi Steve,

Thanks for the discussion this afternoon. Based on what we talked about, the following should provide you with more context on ____________________. I have some quick links to 3 articles below for you that may be helpful.

How We Help:
- Value statement 1 (content link)
- Value statement 2 (content link)
- Value statement 3 (content link)

Per our discussion, we're looking to reconnect next Tuesday to dive a little deeper into ___________. I will send a calendar invite as a reminder for both of us. Don't hesitate to reach out in the meantime.

I look forward to speaking with you in a couple weeks.

Regards,
Joe

Learn From Your Mistakes

You will make mistakes. They may be minor, or they may lose you the deal. The key is to learn, and grow. Go back and analyze your call—what did you say? When did it turn sour? Did you need more research? Better product knowledge?

Check in with your sales coach or mentor to identify what went wrong and come up with a plan for next time.

"

The biggest mistake I have made is not spending enough time with the key decision maker and completely understanding all of their requirements and emotions. Listen to learn.

—Greg Tillar, CEO, NuGrowth Solutions

Avoid Common Mistakes

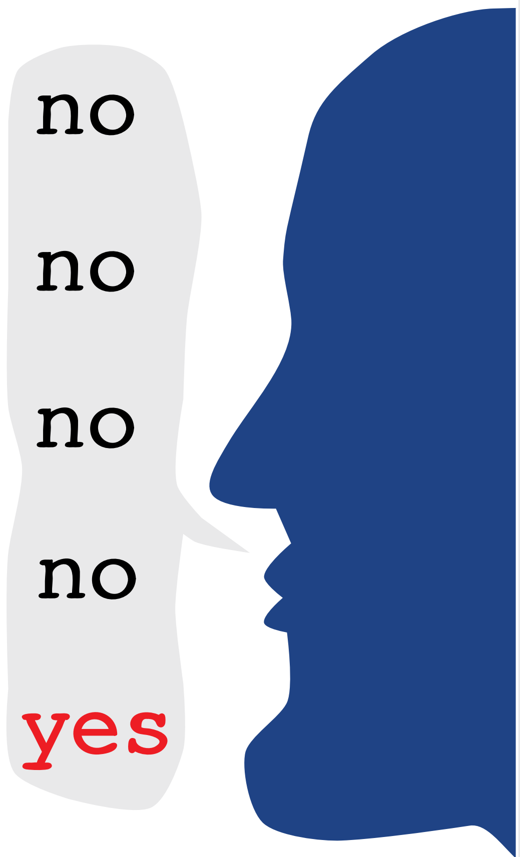
- **Know your stuff: 58%** of buyers reported reps didn't answer their questions effectively
- **Listen more, talk less:** keep responses around 2 minutes
- **Be natural:** avoid sounding robotic or staged
- **Ask questions:** don't assume anything!
- **Be honest:** on pricing, timing, features —if you aren't sure, say you'll follow-up

Be Tenacious

According to a Salesforce.com post, 48% of reps throw in the towel after the first "no," 10% of sales are closed on the fourth contact, and 80% on the fifth to 12th. This means you're ahead of the game as long as you keep picking up the phone. Professional persistence pays off.

Keep in mind your tenacity should reflect your passion—not be annoying. When you call, leave a message saying when you'll call back. If you get the prospect on the phone, but they can't commit to talking, ask when they can.

Be respectful—and don't give up.



> Be professional. Be persistent. Be courageous. Lead. Serve.
>
> —Paul Fuller, President, NuGrowth Digital

Be Professionally Persistent

- If it's a bad time, ask for a better alternative and *stick* to it
- Come to the next call with new information
- Focus on building trust—don't make any promises you can't keep
- Continue contacting till you get a favorable response….
- ….but spread out contacts to avoid annoying a prospect and losing them

Ongoing: Analysis and Improvement

While these before, during and after the call tips will improve your team, the number one contributor to long-term success is a cycle of **analysis and improvement**.

Stay on top of your sales process by constantly evaluating your KPIs and identifying issues in your pipeline. Collaborate as a sales team. Bring in outside resources when you feel stuck.

This constant reach for improvement will keep you and your company at the top.

Review Your Call Notes

As part of documenting your calls, record your perceived performance. Did the call go well? A few key indicators can tell you. Ask yourself:

- [ ] **What did I learn about them as a person and their role?**
- [ ] **What did I learn about the current situation and what they want to accomplish?**
- [ ] **What about my product/service can help them?**
- [ ] **What next steps are in place to continue our conversations?**

If you answered "yes" to most of these questions, chances are it was a success. But, if you're uncertain, this is a perfect call to analyze.

Essential KPIs

- Contact rate
- Calls to conversation rate
- Conversation to appointment
- Contact rate by segment/title
- Opportunities by meetings held

Make Each Call Better Than the Last

Collaboration and discussion are key to improving your sales practice. Try to pinpoint where the call went south and seek to bolster your skills in that area.

Watch other reps at work, listen to podcasts, read articles, and put yourself to the test. Once you feel you've perfected your practice, ask a colleague to sit in on your next call.

Listen to their feedback and incorporate it into your performance.

CONCLUSION

The sales call is still alive and well. But, it has evolved—and your company needs to evolve, too.

However, you can't do it alone. Get your sales team on board with these phone prospecting practices. Start incorporating them in your sales process, ensuing everyone is on the same page. If you haven't yet, start mentorship and coaching for your reps. This practice is the lynchpin for continual improvement.

Eventually, your sales team will feel more at ease with their calls. Although the nervousness may never disappear, they'll never pick up the phone feeling unprepared.

Now pick up that phone and get to work!

Your virtual selling machine

About NuGrowth

NuGrowth Solutions is an outsourced sales and marketing organization dedicated to helping companies grow through professionally persistent market outreach and strategic territory management. We use the term "outsourced" because that is the most commonly understood term in the industry, but a better description would be "branch sales and marketing." When you hire NuGrowth Solutions, you receive a fully operational branch sales and marketing office built to scale.

Our specialization leads to greater effectiveness in each stage of the sales cycle. Using our established sales as a service model, proprietary territory management system and established hiring, team building, and coaching techniques, we bring the people, processes, and systems to bring your organization to new heights in customer acquisition. If you are interested in working with a partner you can trust to grow business, please give us a call at **800-966-3051** or **contact us here**.