



25 Phrases That Pay

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More Self Storage Sales Tips

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Ok, Now go win.

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

1. **"Tell me a little about your situation."**

This is an open ended question designed to let your prospective customers give you clues about what aspects of your product or service will be most useful to their particular circumstance. This is a good question for early in the conversation. More specific questions can come later.

2. **"What do you plan on storing?"**

Slightly more narrow and focused than the question above, but still open ended. This is also a good question for early in the conversation and the answer will often give you clues about what features and benefits of your product and service will be most useful to your prospective customers.

3. **"How do you plan on getting your things here?"**

This question is designed to discover whether it is appropriate to talk about your free moving truck if you have one or about renting them a truck from whatever truck rental company you may be affiliated with, if any.

4. **"What is more important to you, convenience or security?"**

These are not mutually exclusive. You probably have aspects of your property that are designed to deliver both. This question is meant to give you an idea of your prospective customer's priorities. This question allows you to talk about what your prospective customer finds important rather than reciting a laundry list of features.

This is an example of a no-lose question. It steers the conversation and your prospective customer's attention to areas where you have a lot to offer, but that they may not have considered while shopping your competitors. Once they tell you that something is important to them, you can be assured of their full attention and interest when you begin to rattle off the special features and amenities that pertain to that either convenience or security.

5. "How soon will you need to store your things?"

This question gives you a clue for the decision deadline of your prospective customer. If you don't get a reservation or appointment during the phone call, you will want to follow up with your prospective customers. For your follow up to be effective, it needs to happen before their decision deadline.

6. "My name is Kenny, and yours?"

A polite way of getting the prospective customer's name that always works. When you give your name immediately followed by a request for the prospective customer's name, they will feel obligated to reciprocate (because that is the polite to do).

7. "Would you prefer a space that is more like storing your things in a garage or more like a spare bedroom?"

This question is for those facilities that offer climate controlled or air-cooled space. Customers are frequently confused by the more common "are you looking for climate controlled or non-climate controlled storage?" This alternative phrasing gets the job done in terms you prospective customer can understand.

8. "How often will you need to put things in or take things out of your storage space?"

This question gives you another idea of how interested they will be in learning about features of your property that make it convenient to store. If they plan on coming in and out often it may lead you to offer extended gate hours or to suggest a larger unit so that they can more easily access their stored items. If you regularly have larger units available, you might decide to offer a free upgrade in size so that they can more easily access the items in their unit instead of offering a period of free rent.

9. How would you feel if your rent was increased in three or four months?

If you lock your customer's rates for 6 or more months, this is a phrase that will help you better capitalize on that selling point.

This phrase is designed to trigger an emotional reaction on the part of the prospective customer. Most prospective customers will answer

that they would very much dislike having their rent increased in such a short amount of time.

After triggering your prospective customer's emotions, you come to the rescue and explain that they will not have that experience if they rent with you because you will guarantee their rate for a set period of time.

TRANSITION PHRASES

10. "You mentioned..."

This is a way to restate something you learned from your prospective customer's answers to your questions and set yourself up to talk about how your property and service meets that need or desire.

For example, let's say you asked the question, "how often will you need to put things in or take things out of your storage space?" and the customer replied that they would be in their storage unit nearly every day.

As you transition to talking about some of your features that would make their stay more convenient you would grab their attention by relating your amenities back to what they told you they wanted.

"You mentioned you would be in and out of your storage space nearly every day. I have flat carts that you can use for free any time you need them which means you will save time and hassle moving things in and out. And you won't have to bring your own moving equipment."

11. "It sounds like..."

Here's another way to restate your understanding of the customer's situation, needs or desires. From here you can begin talking about how you will satisfy their need or desire.

12. "...which means..."

Here's a great way to connect a feature with a non-obvious benefit. Too often storage managers just list features without helping the prospective customer understand why they should care. An example of this is, "We offer coded gate access which means that we increase security by limiting access to the property to our renters and

discourage any misdeeds because we have a record of who has been in and out and when they were here."

Thanks to Tron Jordheim of PhoneSmart for teaching me this one.

13. "Sounds like we have a great storage space for you."

This phrase helps you transition from asking questions and discovering your prospective customer's needs and wants over to explaining how a specific space you have in mind for them meets those needs and wants. Before this phrase you can have your questions. After this phrase you start describing all of the ways that the storage space meets the prospective customer's needs and wants.

This is a good one to combine with "you mentioned" and "because".

PERSUASIVE PHRASES

14. "Because"

According to research by behavioral scientist Ellen Langer and her colleagues a word very likely to influence you is because.*

In one study, Langer arranged for a stranger to approach someone waiting in line to use a photocopier and simply ask, "Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine?" Sixty percent of those who heard this direct request allowed the stranger to go ahead. However, when the stranger made the request with a reason ("May I use the Xerox machine because I'm in a rush?"), a full 94 percent of people allowed the line cutting.

The word because was only getting started. The researcher Langer added one more twist. The next time she ran the experiment the stranger asking to cut to the front of the line still used the word because, but followed it with a completely meaningless reason. The stranger asked, "May I use the Xerox machine, because I have to make copies?" You would think that the people standing in line would say, "What, are you crazy? We are all in line to make copies."

It didn't matter that the "reason" lacked merit, still 93 percent of the people in line complied with the request to skip to the front.

This photocopy study demonstrates the unique persuasion power of the word because.

Figure out what you want your prospective customers to do, and then give them a "because".

*Langer, E. Blank, A., and Chanowitz, B. (1978). The mindlessness of ostensibly thoughtful action: The role of "placebic" information in interpersonal interaction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 36:639-42.

15. "I know just where you are, and we have lots of customers in your area."

This phrase helps overcome the prospective customer's fear that they might make a bad decision. We all look to the crowd for clues about what works and what to avoid, and the more similar "the crowd" is to us, the more we are influenced by what they do. For example, when we are deciding what movie to go see we look to the crowd in the form of top box office results. We reason that if it is popular it must be good. Often we don't stop at impersonal box office stats, but also seek out the advice of friends we think have similar tastes. Thus, we look to the crowd for clues, and the more they are like us (in their geography, situation, etc.) the more we are influenced.

16. "We have several (or another) <insert business type> who store with us." Or more generally, "We have several businesses like yours who store with us."

This phrase is persuasive for the same reasons as above, but would be more applicable to a business customer.

17. "Our gates are 6' 4" high which means...." Or, "Our driveways are as wide as 3 lanes of traffic which means..."

When you give highly specific information it is more credible and persuasive. A 6 foot gate is better than a "gate", and a six foot four inch gate is more concrete and credible than both.

I used gates and driveways as examples, but you can use this technique with the height of your ceilings, the width of your doors, the

specific number of cameras, the number of steps from the hallway door or elevator to the unit, etc.

COMMITMENT PHRASES

18. "I would love to have your business. Let me see if I can do better. What pricing have you found so far?"

Many managers offer the biggest authorized discount and the lowest price when speaking with prospective customers. I think they do it because they know that many people are price-sensitive and they want to have the greatest opportunity to win the prospective customer's business. This phrase allows a manager to quote a price with smaller or no move-in incentive and have a way improve their offer if their attempt at getting a reservation or appointment fails. After the prospective customer indicates that he or she is not willing to move to a firm commitment and is going to continue shopping then the store manager can back-pedal by saying, "I would love to have your business. Let me see if I can do better. What pricing have you found so far?"

19. "The next step is to fill out the rental paperwork. What would work best for you, later today or tomorrow?"

After you have shown the prospective customer that you can meet or exceed their needs, you'll want to invite them to make some sort of commitment to renting with you. I like inviting prospective customers to come fill out the rental paperwork because if they are not willing to take that step you can always back off to something less threatening like taking a tour of your property.

The second part of this phrase is called an alternative choice close. You are asking them to choose between two alternatives which give them a feeling of control while at the same time making it more difficult to say no. The key is to choose alternatives that both move the prospective customer closer to renting storage space from you.

You can ask for whatever commitment you feel comfortable with. Some ask for a reservation, others ask for the prospective customer to come take a look at the storage space or tour the facility.

20. "Are you comfortable reserving this unit over the phone or would it make more sense for you to come down for a tour."

This is another alternative choice phrasing that I like a lot. This one I learned from Derek Naylor of Storage Marketing Solutions.

MERCHANDISE PHRASES

21. "Come with me over here for a second."

When you want to transition the conversation from the rental transaction which just finished to a conversation about boxes and moving supplies you can use this phrase. The property manager stands up and while walking around the counter says, "Come with me over here for a second," as she leads them to the display of boxes and moving supplies.

The store manager is the host and the customer is the guest. In these roles the customer as guest will generally be compliant with requests made after the rental agreement has been completed and signed. By leading the customer to the displays of boxes and moving supplies your property manager is now in a position to suggest, explain, and demonstrate how to use the less ordinary items like dish packs, mattress covers, and the plastic wrap.

Once you are over to the merchandise area you can ask...

22. "How many more boxes will you need before you are ready to move?"

This is more persuasive than simply asking if they need any boxes because the way the question is phrased implies that the customer needs boxes and intends to purchase some.

SETTING UP AUTOMATIC CREDIT CARD BILLING

23. "I'll need your driver's license and credit card."

By asking for the credit card at the beginning of the rental process you know immediately whether they have a credit card. Also, it implies that everyone who does business with you pays by credit card. People are compliant when they think they are following a standard payment process that was good enough for everyone else.

This same phrase could be used for "bank card" if you would rather process a debit transaction, or "voided check" if you want to steer people toward an automatic EFT payment.

24. "No problem. If you ever want to pay by cash or from a different account simply stop by or mail your payment information so that we get it before your due date and we won't charge your credit card."

This is an easy way to overcome a customer's objection to paying their bill automatically via credit or debit card. It enrolls them in the automatic payment process and also reassures them that they can still pay with a different method if they choose to.

PRICE STALL

25. "So that I can quote you the right price, can I ask you a few questions?"

Often one of the first questions a prospective customer asks is, "how much for a [fill in unit size]?" If you answer with a price right away the prospective customer will usually politely hang up and move on to the next store on their list. This phrase is a way to acknowledge that you heard their request and that you want and intend to give them the information they are asking for while giving you the opportunity to move beyond price for minute. The space you create in the conversation will allow you to build the value of your product in the prospect's mind as well as to build rapport.

A second hat-tip to Tron Jordheim at PhoneSmart for teaching me this one.