

## GPMP, SPMP and SCMP

I was reminded the other day about a column I wrote for *Quick Printing* nearly 8 years ago. It was titled “IQDD—An Acronymic Approach to Printing Sales” and it was published in August 1998. That column introduced an acronym that stands for Identification, Qualification, Discussion & Decision—the steps that a printing salesperson should follow in determining whether a “suspect” is worthy of a concerted selling effort.

Now I have some new acronyms for you: GPMP, SPMP & SCMP. Read on, and I’ll tell you what they stand for, and why they’re important to you.

### GPMP

GPMP stands for General Prospecting Marketing Plan, and I believe that every printing salesperson should have one. It’s a sad fact that most salespeople don’t do enough prospecting, and what prospecting they do is often poorly organized and executed.

My attitude toward prospecting is pretty mechanical in nature. In other words, I recommend a very specific process, and a big part of the key to success is simply repeating that process enough times to yield the desired results.

The GPMP I recommend starts with the identification of “suspect” companies. (A suspect is a company that you think/hope might qualify as a prospect, and there’s no other requirements at the first stage of this process than to think or hope that they buy enough of the kind of printing you’re best equipped to sell to make pursuing them worthwhile. Part of the GPMP is to *disqualify* anyone who doesn’t meet that criteria.) The basic idea is to take a first look at each company or organization in your area and make a decision as to whether they’re worth a closer look.

If they are, the next step in the GPMP is to identify at least one decision-maker. The strategy I recommend for that is simply to talk to the gate-keeper—the first person you encounter when you call on the phone or walk in the door. And as I’ve written before, the specific strategy I recommend is approach the gatekeeper with the intent of sending information through the mail. “My name is Dave Fellman, and I’m from Dave’s Printing, and I’d like to send some information about my company in the mail to your company. Can you tell me, please, who should I address it to? Who’s the person who’s most involved in buying the (letterhead, envelopes, business cards, business forms, marketing materials, product manuals, etc.) for your company?”

When given a name, the next opportunity is to confirm that it’s that it’s a person you really want to talk to, and to capture all of the contact information you’ll need. Please note my use of the word “opportunity.” You are *in contact* at this point, with a live human being who can answer your questions and provide you with information. The information I want includes title, mailing address, phone number(s) and e-mail address.

Quick, what common document often contains all of that information and more? Hopefully you’re thinking “business card” and making a note to always ask the gatekeeper if he/she has one of the decision-maker’s business cards handy.

The next step is an introductory letter, and the purpose of that letter is simply to avoid making a cold call on the decision-maker. The letter I recommend says three things—*I’m interested in you and I think I can bring value to you so I’m going to call you to see if we can set up a meeting*. That sets up my phone call: “Hi, this is Dave Fellman from Dave’s Printing. I wrote to you the other day and I promised that I would call to see if we can set up a meeting. How does that sound?”

### Waste Of Time?

For what it’s worth, I hear a lot of commentary about how introductory letters are a waste of time because nobody reads them. That’s ridiculous. I know from both my own selling experience and my sales coaching experience that some people do read them. Granted, they very rarely call you immediately upon receiving your letter, but that’s not the strategic intent of the letter in my GPMP. It’s all about avoiding a cold call, and building a little bit of trust at the same time. Note what I say in my follow up call: “I wrote to you and I *promised* that I would call.”

I think it’s also worth noting that your expectations have a lot to do with whether you think an introductory letter will work or not. If you expect your letter to ensure a telephone conversation with 9 out of 10 suspects, you’re sure to be disappointed. The other side of the coin is that pure cold calling might result in meaningful conversations with perhaps 2 out of 10. The letter strategy (coupled with solid voice mail strategy, which I’ll get to in a moment) seems

to yield meaningful conversations with 3 or 4 out of 10, and that's a 50% to 100% improvement over pure cold calling. I'll take that!

### **Voice Mail**

Voice mail is unavoidable, but it's not the "sales killer" that most salespeople make it out to be. The fact of the matter is that buyers don't hide behind voice mail, they use it to make themselves more efficient, just like sellers do. If they're interested in you, they'll call you back. If they're not, they won't. It's really that simple.

Strategically, that suggests that you need to leave an interesting voice mail message. In my GPMP, that message is specifically about why I think the buyer should call me back. It's a scripted message, but that doesn't mean that I read it woodenly from a script. It does mean, though, that I've given a lot of thought to what I want to say, and that I've written and edited and practiced and practiced until my scripted message sounds natural and professional. Again, not everyone will return your calls, but the combination of an effective introductory letter and follow up strategy—including a solid voice mail strategy—will probably make you 50% to 100% more effective in terms of connecting with your suspects.

### **Prospecting Ends**

The purpose of a GPMP is to generate appointments. At that point, *prospecting* ends and something else begins. The first face-to-face meeting is the beginning of the *convincing stage*, but more importantly, it's the heart of the *opportunity stage*. In other words, it's all about asking questions to identify real opportunity—not just that they buy a lot of printing, but that they also have some level of dissatisfaction with the status quo that should translate into some interest in buying from you. Once you define that opportunity, the next step in the convincing stage is to develop an SPMP to capitalize on it.

Next month I'll explain how to put together a Specific Prospect Marketing Plan