

How To Pry Open The Gatekeeper's Gate

By [Jim Meisenheimer](#) on Jan 24, 2008 | [Creating Demand](#)



How come everything difficult about selling has a dreadful label?

Words like prospecting, cold calling, gatekeepers, and even the word closing seldom inspire inspiration, motivation or initiative.

I'd like to share some ideas on how you can get a better reception with the gatekeepers you meet in your territory.

Gatekeepers aren't really gatekeepers. They are people like you and me. A lot of salespeople get off to a poor start with gatekeepers because they don't treat them like people - ordinary people.

When you walk into an office and approach the gatekeeper you have one thing in mind. "How can I get past the gatekeeper and get to the decision-maker." The gatekeeper has radar that goes on quickly, especially when salespeople are approaching.

The gatekeeper has multiple responsibilities. I'm guessing that one of them is to keep babbling, unprepared, disorganized, unfriendly, and self-centered salespeople from pestering and possibly annoying senior managers.

I'm also guessing that most gatekeepers are anxious to help their senior managers identify cost saving opportunities, new products, new services, new trends, and even new contacts that add value to their organization. Hey, they have brains too, ya know.

Let's begin from the gatekeeper's perspective. They don't like pushy and aggressive salespeople. They don't like salespeople who talk too much. They don't like salespeople who have all the answers even before they ask any questions. They especially don't like salespeople who treat them like invisible servants.

Try this on for size. Most people respond well to people who are courteous. Most people respond well to people who speak softly. Most people respond well to people who ask questions. Most people respond well to people who ask for help and advice. Most people respond well to people who have a sense of humor.

If you routinely or even occasionally drop-in to see people without appointments – you can classify that as a reoccurring task. These tasks should be prepared in advance.

There are many ways to approach a gatekeeper. If you don't prepare your approach in advance it's likely that yours will duplicate what other salespeople have said.

Here's an example of what you can say the next time you meet a gatekeeper. Since I personally prepared this for you, it's highly unlikely that your gatekeepers have ever heard this before.

As you open the door to the office make sure you're smiling and your chin is up and in the locked position.

Speaking softly, introduce yourself. For example, "Good morning, my name is Jim Meisenheimer and I'm with the Superior Products Company."

Then say, "I need your help." Remain silent until the gatekeeper says something like "How can I help you".

Then say, "I need your advice on what would be the best way for me to get five minutes with Bill Anderson."

If she says, "you'll have to make an appointment" simply ask who should you see to arrange one.

If she asks, "what is this in regards to" give her your "ELEVATOR SPEECH". An "Elevator Speech" briefly describes what you do and how you add value in less time than it takes an elevator to get from the lobby to the 15th floor.

Then say, "I'm not sure what we offer is what Bill Anderson needs." (Soft and subtle)

Then say, "After five-minutes with Bill Anderson he'll either show me the door or want to know more." (There's no risk – if you don't add value – you're out the door in five minutes)

Take a moment to re-read the above. Read it out loud. Conventional wisdom suggests that salespeople show up and throw up. My approach is different and creates a hard to resist conversation between you and the gatekeeper.

There's a huge difference between sounding canned and being prepared.

Knowing what you're going to say, before you say it will differentiate you from 90 percent of all salespeople.

The best way to pry open a gatekeeper's gate is not to use an ax. The best way may be to ask for advice and a real quick five minutes with the decision maker.

You'll get the cold shoulder less often if you warm up your approach to the gatekeeper.

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