



Ten Things

Salespeople can do
During this Crazy Time

Chris Peterson - Vector Firm

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number One...

Idea #1: Give yourself a deadline on every task.

Every weekday I wake up at 4:55 am. I check and respond to overnight email, workout (run or weights), meditate, walk the dog, eat breakfast, shower and dress by 7:35, which is when I drive my daughter to school. I do the same routine when traveling, but I substitute iron clothes for walking the dog. I know where I need to be and if I'm ahead or behind along the entire 160 minutes and I never miss getting her to school on time.



This morning was different. My daughter doesn't have school and I probably won't be traveling for the next four weeks or so. My deadlines aren't that concrete right now. Guess what? This morning, I took a little more time than usual on my emails, moved through my stretching and warm-up at about half the pace as usual, and wasn't done with my routine until 8:25. I did nothing additional or different, but I took an extra fifty minutes.

Parkinson's Law states "Work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion." Since much of your work and deadlines have been extended, your time has expanded infinitely. Don't allow your work to fill that chasm. Get things done. Get them done with as much urgency as possible. Unlike a few weeks ago when most of your urgency was driven by customers, you'll have to create it for yourself over the next few weeks. How?

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number One...

For every task, give yourself a deadline. If you have to complete a proposal and you have the whole afternoon to do so, complete it by 2:30. If you're going to research and identify twenty new prospective channel partners in your region and you've got all week in your home office, get it done by Monday close of business. If you're going to start calling those prospects on your list, start at 7:30 and get it done by 9:30.

I'm not suggesting that you rush and perform poorly. In fact, take advantage of the free mental time and get creative. However, give yourself a reasonable deadline on every single task.

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Two

Idea #2: Learn to use your webcam during calls.

For those of you in the AV space, it's normal to use the webcam. However, conference calls in the security and IT industries rarely utilize live video. Since you'll be cooped up in your home office for the next few weeks, learn to use your webcam.



I think all of you will agree that using a webcam is a more impactful way to communicate. For those of you that have kids or grandkids, when is the last time you called them without facetimeing them? Many of you don't use video because you may not know the best practices and don't realize how easy it is to become a master video-caller.

So I thought I'd list a few best practices:

- 1. Don't worry about perfection.** Your audience needs to be able to hear you and see you well enough to understand and communicate properly, but don't worry about making your office a studio.
- 2. Use the right lighting.** For less than \$50 (I spent about \$30), you can order lighting to help your video. If you use proper lighting one time, you'll never stop using it – the difference is drastic, but you'll never notice until you try it. It's simple – buy a light (you can search for “selfie lights”, “webinar light kits”, etc.) that will work for your scenario. I bought one with a flexible extension that will travel with me. Yours can be simpler. Set up the light just above your web cam and make sure it balances with all the other lighting in the room.

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Two...

3. Let others know that you'll be using a webcam, but they don't have to.

4. Dress properly. Web cam dress codes are a step down from regular office dress code, but not more than a step. If you're calling into an office that has a business dress code, don't wear a golf shirt, but also don't worry about the power suit. You can land somewhere in between. Never be overly casual – you still want to show respect to your audience – but wearing a tie on a web call seems almost as silly as wearing a sweaty workout shirt.

5. Be yourself. Yes, they can see you, but that's ok. There's nothing better than having someone who is comfortable in their skin leading a call or meeting.

6. Finally, don't forget that you're on camera. Don't check your text messages or pick your nose or eat a hot dog during the call. (While I've got your attention, don't ever eat a hot dog.)

So, that's it. Use this crazy, isolated time as an excuse and tell your customers "I'm trying to use a webcam to stay connected to my clients, so I'll be using one later today." Some will join you, most will not, but all will appreciate the engagement.

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Three...

Idea #3: Call one customer every morning just to offer your help and thank them for their business.

In 1999, I was referred to a realtor that helped me buy my first house. I think he did a pretty good job. Nothing exceptional, but I guess he did his job. However, I referred him to several of my friends over the next few years. Why? Because he called me every two months or so,



just to thank me for my business and ask me if he could help me in any way.

When I had to move temporarily in 2001, he helped me find a short-term property manager. If he hadn't retired before I bought my next house in 2007, I would've used him again.

Your customers are going through the same type of chaos as you are. Many are under more stress. Call them. Offer your help. Don't worry about reaching them. Simply call at about 7:50 in the morning, leave them a voicemail, and say this (using the appropriate names): "Hi Jennifer, this is Chris Peterson from Vector Firm. I'm just calling to see if there is anything I can help with during this crazy time. I'm sure you've got a million things on your plate, so let me know if I can do anything to help. Thank you again for being a client of ours, and please reach out if I can help."

Do this every morning before anything else. After a month or so, repeat until we're done with this mess. By the way, I don't think my realtor ever reached me directly, but his voicemails always made me smile.

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Four...

Idea #4: Deliver unsolicited ideas to your clients and prospects.

I buy shakes, protein bars, and supplements from Beachbody. (To clarify to those that just laughed at a 50-year-old referring to Beachbody, I work with a nutritionist and one of her affiliations is Beachbody.) I buy the same things from them every month or two. I



don't do the workouts, I don't partake in their 30-day challenges, and I don't go on their cruises. I just buy healthy, plant-based stuff – that's it.

Guess what? I received an email this morning offering me access to their entire library of virtual workouts and I'm probably going to do it. My gym is closed. I run three days a week, but I don't think I want to run more than that, and I like my balance of weights and running. So, I'm going to try this Beachbody thing. I won't post photos of me on social media – don't worry.

Your customers need things right now. I don't know what they need, but they need help on things that they didn't need last week. Perhaps it's extra parking lot surveillance because their building is vacant more hours than usual? Maybe they could use some remote video monitoring?

Maybe their guards are unable to work, so they could use a visitor management system? I don't know ... it could be as simple as a company managing their network remotely because the IT staff is fractured. Whatever they need, think about it.

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Four...

Seriously, think about your top clients and prospects and the problems facing them right now? How can you help? After developing the answer, build a budgetary proposal and send to them. Simply state: "I assume that you're facing this challenge right now and I've developed a solution. I know you didn't request this, but I was thinking about you and thought I'd send your way. The pricing is budgetary, so let me know if you're interested in me preparing a detailed scope and price. I'm happy to do so."

A week ago, I made fun of my neighbor who is a P90X junkie. I know that I made fun of him last week because I make fun of him every week. Tomorrow morning, I'll be doing lunges with resistant bands in my living room ... and I'll be paying for it! All because Beachbody sent me an unsolicited idea.

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Five...

Idea #5: Visualize yourself on June 20th What's it look like?

During the downfall of the economy in 2008 / 09, our financial planner's firm decided to take a unique stance. Instead of begging their clients to keep their money in the market or trying to convince others to invest with them, they focused on becoming known as the experts in the marketplace.



The firm, Crossley Shear, held monthly educational events at wine shops and hip restaurants and craft beer bars and kitchens that gave cooking lessons. Every month, dozens of clients and potential clients attended these events, spending the first 30 minutes learning about the short-sale process or buying a foreclosure or borrowing from your IRA, and then enjoying some wine or learning how to prepare sushi. I don't think any of us invested more money with them the during those months. Heck, most of the attendees were there for the free food and drinks because times were so tough! However, once the economy started to turn, their current clients like me were deeply committed and the guests that we brought to these events didn't speak to anyone else. They educated us during the hard times, so we viewed them as the experts.

I don't know how long our current slow-down is going to last, but I know this – it won't be as long as the economic downfall we experienced about a decade ago. I selected June 20th because it's exactly three months from the day of this posting. I may be wrong, but I don't think I'll be off by too much.

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Five...

On June 20th, where will you be? Will you be cruising along or catching up? What will be your activity level? Will you be scrambling from sucking wind or buried in requests from customers and prospects? How about your pipeline of business? Is it disseminated or just pushed a little to the right? How about your exposure to your market? Are you reintroducing yourself after a hiatus or have you become more visible and valuable? Are you the one that delivered valuable content and services remotely or did you waste this unique opportunity?

Visualize yourself on June 20th. Visualize yourself being in a position like my friends at Crossley Shear. Visualize yourself with a huge smile on your face because you took advantage of this strange time to create a brand for yourself by helping your customers and prospects ... and now visualize yourself reaping the rewards!

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Six...

Idea #6: Document every positive thing that happens throughout the day.

When I started Vector Firm, I was fighting two demons: the demon of anxiety that worried about failure, and the demon of temptation in the form of opportunities to go back into the workforce. Every day for the first eight or nine months, I thought about returning to the work



force; and every day for about four years I worried about failing. Within the same day – heck within the same hour sometimes – I was at the lowest of lows and the highest of highs. Not unlike every other new business, it was a rollercoaster. Except for one time each day. There was one time where I never felt down. One time – the same time every day – that I felt like my idea was going to work...

At the end of every day, I would read a white 8.5" x 11" piece of printer paper that had a long list of scribbled bullet points. It would say things like: Good presentation with Genetec, Steve W. returned my call, and Two likes on my LinkedIn post. Some days that paper was full and some days it wasn't - but there were always at least ten reminders of positive things that happened that day. It sounds funny, but those lists got me through 2010 – 2014 (especially 2011).

You're in the middle of a tough time and you don't have a cheerleading team lifting your spirits. Become your own cheerleader. Write down every positive thing that happens throughout the day on a piece of paper and review it before leaving the office. You didn't get thrown out of an account? Write it down. A channel partner called about an opportunity? Write it down. You won an order? Write it down. You read a great blog post? Write it down!

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Seven...

Idea #7: Remember your dark days of selling.

Do you recall those dark days after starting a new sales role for a new company? Not the first few months when you're in the honeymoon phase or the next few months when you were cranking out the activity.



It usually happens sometime between the sixth and ninth month. You've worked your tail off for a while, learning the systems of your new company, getting to know your new accounts, spending every day in the field finding new business, performing presentations or demo's practically every day, and generating proposal after proposal.

The top of your funnel is packed, but nothing has dropped out of the bottom. Maybe the twenty-year customer that was handed to you ordered a few things, but you're not close to hitting your monthly number. You've busted your tail for months and nothing is happening.

You question your ability, your type of activity, your fit with the new company, and whether you're going to have a job soon. Worst of all, you question and doubt yourself. "This should be happening by now!" incessantly mutters through your head.

Remember that? If you've had more than one sales job, you've probably been through this scenario. I call this period the dark days of selling. You've done a ton of hard work and received zero positive feedback in sales or commissions. Uncertainty creeps in to dominate your thoughts. So, what happened?

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Seven...

Almost every time, the funnel busts open and you start to see the orders flooding into the system. It's mathematics. You've added dozens of proposals to the system. You've made more and more touches with your customers and prospects and have closer relationships.

You've gotten better at presenting and leading discussions about the value of your new company. It's just simple mathematics.

Well, during this time of uncertainty, I want you to reflect to your dark days of selling. You probably have multiple examples – I have five stories, including Vector Firm. Remember the 24-7 negativity in your head.

Feel the knots that formed in your stomach every time your boss asked to see you. And fully embrace the joy and pride you had when the sales started to flow.

We're in the same situation with our COVID-19 crisis right now. It might seem like we've been practicing social distancing or complete lockdowns for months, but it hasn't even been two weeks as of this posting (Tuesday, March 24th). You might be wondering if the curve will ever flatten. You might get scared multiple times throughout the day. We're in the dark days right now – we've put in a ton of work and have no positive results to show for it. Sound familiar?

Of course it does, but just like that sales funnel was about to bust open, we will have some good news soon ...

I'm not medically qualified to state any of the below thoughts with certainty or imply that these things will happen. However, I think it's helpful to think about these four dynamics:

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Seven...

1. Since our testing was scarce, we're now catching up and have a large backlog of people that need testing. The rapid growth rate that we're seeing is a bit artificial because many of those that are being classified as new cases would've been counted as news cases days earlier if the testing was available.

Once we catch up with the backlog of people needing tests, the growth rate of new cases will be more accurate.

2. Two weeks ago, tens of millions of people filled arenas and theatres for hockey, basketball, concerts, movies, etc. The NBA suspended its season late Wednesday, March 11th (only 13 days ago). We're not seeing the positive impact of social distancing yet.

Just like your initial sales had to move through a selling cycle and most of your sales in month eight were proposed in month five, the new cases over the last week or so were created before our social distancing efforts. All of this hard work will start to pay positive dividends within a week or so.

3. The curve that needs to flatten is the Active Cases curve. For this curve to flatten and eventually decrease, two things need to happen: the daily new cases need to decrease, and the daily new recoveries need to increase.

The former will happen as statements one and two above take effect. However, since it takes about two to four weeks for active cases to be considered recovered, it's going to take a little longer for this metric to make an impact on the curve. As of this writing, about 42,000 Americans have tested positive, but only about 800 of these cases are closed. Within the next two to three weeks, we'll start to see thousands per day recover.

4. Every scientist will rightfully state that there isn't enough data to conclude that a warmer and more humid climate slows the spread of coronavirus transmissions.

However, there are many articles with reputable organizations stating that this conclusion is very plausible.

[Click here for an article with tests from MIT, Johns Hopkins, and the University of Utah](#) .

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Again, I am not claiming to be qualified to state the above dynamics are going to lead to a near-term recovery. However, that's not my objective. My objective is to provide some reason to my readers – even if its anecdotal (the left side of my brain is struggling with the concept of “anecdotal reason”). Remember those dark days of selling and more importantly, remember the awesome days afterward. The dark days are here right now, but those awesome days of victory aren't far away. It's simple mathematics.

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Eight...

Idea #8: Assume that your customers need you now more than ever.

I'm sure many of you have heard the below parable, but oblige me by taking a few seconds to read it again...



There were two salespeople competing for a promotion at a shoe company. After months of conversation, leadership could not determine a winner. So, they decided to have the two of them compete in a contest, with the winner getting the promotion. The company wanted to open a new store in a very rural part of their state, feeling like that region was underserved by retailers. The two salespeople were asked to spend a couple days in the new territory and then tell leadership how they would approach the market. The salesperson with the best idea would win the promotion.

Salesperson #1 only spent a day in the area and reported back to leadership immediately with a definitive conclusion: "We should not build a store there. It's so rural, no one wears shoes."

Salesperson #2 spent an extra day in the area and enthusiastically charged into the executive conference exclaiming: "We need to build several stores there. Everyone needs shoes."

Salesperson #2 got the promotion!

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Eight...

What perception are you bringing to the market every day during this crisis?

Permit yourself to wake up feeling like no one is working or buying anything, but by 7:30 make sure you're in the right mindset and assuming that your customers need you now more than ever.

I've been shocked to hear how many of my clients are busy right now. The salespeople continue to be behind in generated quotes and the work is continuing to move forward. Last week, we spent much of our calls brainstorming ideas to manage this scenario. This week we're discussing business again. It's not booming like it was a month ago, but companies are still functioning, and they need you. More important to your success ... you need to believe they need you now more than ever.

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Nine...

Idea #9: Spend three hours per week practicing your craft ... and then make it a habit.

I was interviewed for a podcast a few months ago by my friend, Armando Perez, owner of Hoosier Security. The topic was sales management and he prepared me for every question except that last one:

“Chris, in one word, what advice could you give to all the sales managers listening to this?”



One word? If I could work with 300 words, I'd easily answer this question. But one? He stumped me for about seven seconds. Then it hit me. The one thing that we don't do anymore. The one thing that I haven't seen sales teams consistently do since 1996. The one thing that will separate the good from the amazing. What's the word? ...

Practice.

Sales is a career that requires excellent performance. Salespeople are measured constantly. They're compensated for and promoted or fired because of their performance. But they don't practice. Athletes practice, actors practice, pilots practice, and all other professions that require constant performance practice. Salespeople don't practice. Why? There are a million reasons but the one I always hear is time, or the lack of it. Guess what? You've got some flexibility now. You may still be busy, but your calendar is also probably more flexible. So ... let's practice.

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Nine...

Check out www.vectorfirmacademy.com for a virtual sales training program. Yes, that sentence is a commercial (and so is the ad below), but the point of the rest of this post is that you need to practice, and you've got some time now. So, practice three hours per week and make it a habit to do at least one per week after this mess is behind us.

VECTOR FIRM Sales Academy

The Vector Firm Sales Academy has been created for sales people that work for system integrators and their technology partners. The Academy is a continual sales training program that provides lessons on different topics each month. We understand the hectic schedule of today's salesperson, so we've designed our training to be fully implemented in less than 90 minutes per month.

Every month brings a new topic. The main event of the month is a live webinar at the same day and time. Even if you miss a webinar, you can access the recording of the live session. Several learning exercises are delivered throughout the rest of the month: an action item for members to implement that will help them turn the ideas into actions, two short videos, a podcast interview with a subject matter expert, and a blog post.



MONTHLY WEBINARS

The core of the month's lesson is the webinar, delivered live on the second Friday of the month at two times: 10:00 am and 1:00 pm Eastern. The Webinars provide the teaching of the month, and are delivered by Chris Peterson and a different guest moderator every month.



PODCASTS & VIDEOS

Our podcast interviews with different sales professionals and our brief videos have become very popular offerings. In the twenty-minute podcasts and three-minute videos, we tell stories and discuss real-world ideas about the month's topic. The Podcasts and Videos provide the learning retention (and entertainment) of the month.



ACTION ITEMS

Our goal is to help our members learn new ideas and put them into action. Therefore, every month we provide an exercise for our members to do that will help them use the concepts we teach in the webinar and make them more effective professionals. The Action Items provide the implementation of the month.



POINTS & REWARDS

As you progress through each lesson plan, you'll earn points and will be able to compete against other members of your team and all Academy members. Our points program gives you rewards and recognition for your participation. The Points & Rewards provide the competition of the month and year.

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Join Today**

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Ten...

Idea #10: Ask yourself this question: “What can I do now that will make me proud in one year?”

During my high school senior baseball season, I had very high expectations for my team and myself. A week before the season started, I strained a hamstring in practice and was held out of a preseason tournament that had a lot of exposure. I had to sit there on the bench for four games and watch my teammates. As we rolled into our second preseason tournament, I was ready to roll, and it showed.



In game two, we beat Miami Opa Locka Pace in extra innings, with me batting two for three against future Major Leaguer Alex Fernandez and throwing out a pinch runner trying to steal second base in the last inning (I was a catcher). The next day, I hit two home runs against Ft. Lauderdale Cardinal Gibbons, who would go on to win the state championship that year. Finally, I got a chance to shine after hurting myself. I couldn't wait to see the headlines the next day in the newspaper. I was wondering if they'd want an exclusive interview with me. I woke up the next morning, grabbed the paper and there it was ... a small mention on page seven of the sports page.

I was overly sensitive and needy for attention at that time of my life. I needed that headline. I needed to see my picture. It didn't matter that this was an out-of-conference preseason tournament that didn't really mean anything. I wanted my attention. I was so self-conscious to stomp my feet like a three-year-old, but I wanted to. This snub really put me in an emotional tailspin that impacted the next several games.

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Ten...

I'm embarrassed by that attitude. I'm embarrassed by the way I handled that situation. I'm embarrassed that I was so emotionally weak that I needed that superficial, external feedback to make me happy. I'm embarrassed that I allowed it to impact my performance and my teammates. I'm embarrassed by my behavior and actions... and that was over three decades ago.

When I arrived at the Sacramento airport on Friday, March 6th and read the news about the ISC West Exhibit in Las Vegas being rescheduled, the Coronavirus pandemic became real to me. That night, on my flight home, I didn't work like I usually do. Nope, I watched a movie and then did some thinking about the next few weeks. I had no idea our situation would be where it is today, but I knew we were in for uncertainty. As I've done many times in the past during uncertain times – following 9/11, during the 2008/09 downfall, and while starting Vector Firm – I recalled my behavior and actions during my senior high school season and pledged to act differently. I might make mistakes, but whatever I do will make me proud in a year from now. I wrote that down, and I wrote down the answers, too. Below are some of the items (most have been added since that flight):

1. I'll invest time in making Vector Firm Sales Academy the very best virtual sales training program in the world.
2. I'll wake up every day at the same time as usual – 4:55.
3. I'll fix my nagging plantar fasciitis.
4. I'll provide ideas and leadership to Vector Firm's followers and to our industry.
5. I'll provide leadership to my wife and daughter.
6. I'll catch up on all those house improvements that have been bugging me.

I'm making some mistakes, I'm sure. But I'm busting it right now. I'm playing first grade teacher with my wife every morning and spending the rest of the day playing small business owner.

Ten things salespeople can do during this crazy time. Number Ten...

I'm keeping a positive and realistic attitude and not getting absorbed in the things I can't control (I need to do a better job at this, but I'm extremely pleased with how focused I've been and how little I'm checking the news).

In short, I'm proud of myself. I know in a year from now, I'll be even prouder. Ask yourself this question. Answer this question. Read it every day.

Writing these ten posts has been a very cool experience. Thank you for reading and for your comments – they really do make my day (I guess I still have a little need for external feedback 😊).

About Chris Peterson

Chris Peterson has 25 years of experience in sales and sales leadership, with a focus on system integrators. Chris started Vector Firm in 2010 as a provider of outsourced sales leadership and sales process consulting. Today, Vector Firm offers Sales Training, Digital Marketing Services, Sales Management Consulting, and Professional Speaking Services. Vector Firm has worked with over 90 clients since 2010, on projects ranging from two-day strategic sales planning sessions to multi-year retained engagements. Through its Sales Academy, Vector Firm has paid subscribers from dozens of other companies. Finally, Chris has been a paid speaker at over 150 events, spanning six countries and three continents.



Before starting Vector Firm, Chris spent seven years as a vice president of sales and marketing on a national and global scale. It was during these years that he realized that the act of buying was changing drastically. He spent many weekends developing a sales program that thrives in the post-Internet era of business to business sales. Chris is a graduate from the University of Florida, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. He lives in Downtown Orlando with his wife Shannon and daughter Manhattan. Chris serves as an International Vice President of the Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity. Chris is a season ticket holder of the Orlando Magic basketball and the Florida Gators football teams. He enjoys working out, playing golf, and spending time in his backyard with his family and friends. He and Shannon have a passion for travel, with recent trips to South Africa, England, Cape Cod, The Outer Banks, and the Black Hills of South Dakota.