

Overcoming Anxiety Over the Phone:

*A Guide to Getting
Comfortable with
Telephonic Sales*

SENIOR MARKET
ADVISORS 



Cold calling isn't easy, but it's part of the job. If you're not comfortable with talking to strangers on the phone, selling insurance may not be the job for you.

Keep in mind you cannot make cold calls for Medicare Advantage sales - you'll need to receive permission to contact before reaching out to a Medicare Advantage lead. But you can make cold calls for products like Medicare Supplements, Final Expense, or Life Insurance.



Addressing Your Call Anxiety

It's not uncommon to be anxious about making cold calls. Even the most experienced agents get nervous about cold calls. In fact, the nervousness you're feeling is a good sign - it means you care, and it can encourage you to work hard to become great at cold calling! Regardless, let's address some of those anxious thoughts you're having, right now.

"I can't make a cold call!"

Yes, you can. Thousands of other insurance agents are making cold calls every single day. It's stressful and unpredictable, but anyone can do it with a little practice.

"What if they hang up on me?"

What if they don't? You never know what's going to happen, and ignoring the task at hand isn't helpful. Plus, even if they do hang up on you (which is bound to happen at least once or twice), so what? Brush yourself off and move on to the next call on your list. You can't take these things personally. You're doing your job, and they don't want to talk to an insurance representative. You'll find someone who will.

"What if I can't answer all their questions?"

You may not be able to answer all their questions in one phone call, and that's ok. If they ask you something you don't know the answer to, just say, "Great question, can I get back to you on that?" and move on. Chances are that the person you're talking to will be ok with the fact that you don't know EVERYTHING, and this will give you an excuse to call them back anyway. The more times you talk to a client, the more your relationship can grow, and the more likely they will be to buy from you.

"What if they say no?"

The fact is, they very well might say no. That's ok. For every "yes" you get, there will be several "no's" that precede it. It's all part of the job.

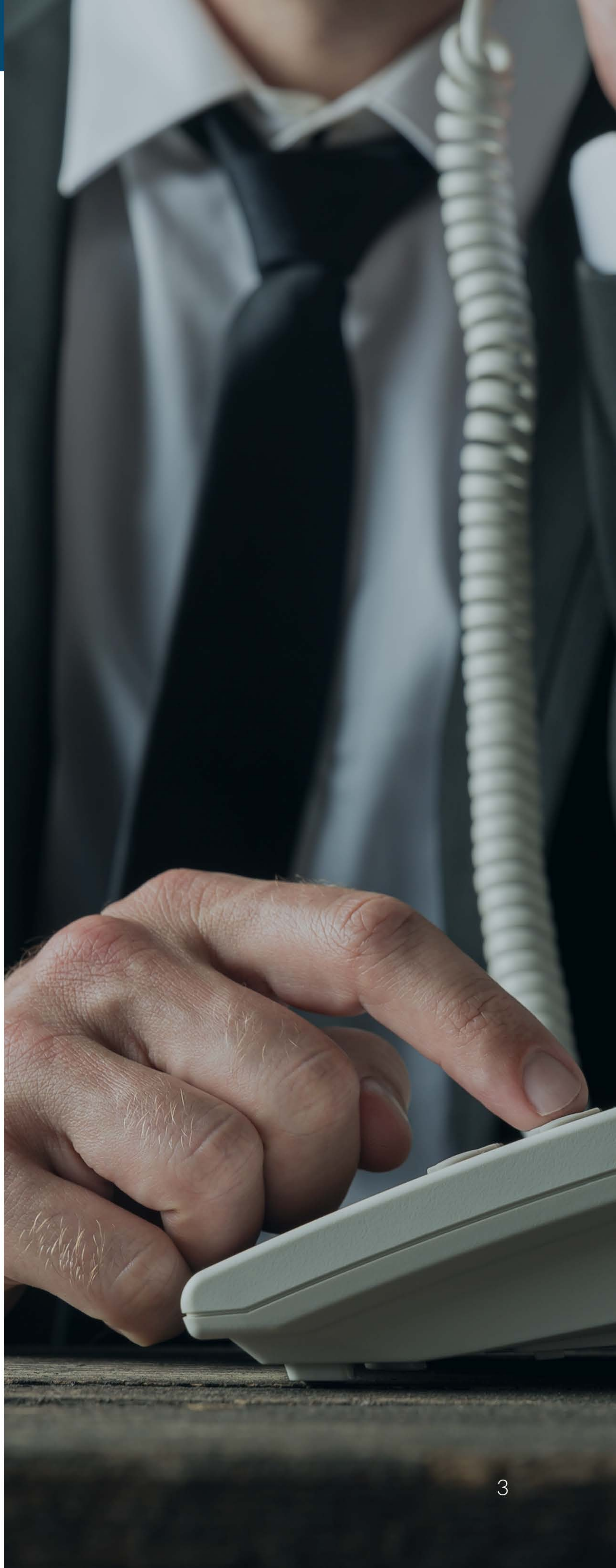
Think Positive

You can sit around and ask yourself “what if” questions all day, or you can get to it. There’s always going to be a reason not to pick up the phone. Remind yourself of all the positive outcomes you can get when you make cold calls. Think positive. Think of all the appointments you can set and sales you can make just from picking up the phone. Think of what you’ll do with the money you earn from your commissions!

Schedule Your Cold Calls

It’s always easiest to put off the things you don’t want to do. Instead of repeatedly telling yourself, “I’ll get around to it,” block out time in your calendar to make cold calls. If it helps, designate a specific day of the week (or two) to focus on cold calls. That way, you’ll know exactly what to expect out of every day. If Thursday is your cold calling day, but you really like hosting events, then make Friday your event day. Then, you’ll know that if you can just get through all your cold calls on Thursday, you’ll be able to do the work you enjoy on Friday!

Another great trick is to set a timer. Give yourself breathing room. Tell yourself that you’ll make cold calls for exactly 50 minutes, then take a ten-minute break. You might spend those whole 50 minutes of cold calling getting excited about those ten minutes - but that’s ok, as long as it encourages you to be productive. Use those ten minutes to take a quick walk, stretch, grab a snack, etc. - whatever gets you motivated to pick up the phone again.



Use A Script

Scripts can make your phone calls sound overly salesy and automated, so don't rely on your scripts too heavily - but use them as guides. Having written guidelines in front of you can ease some of your call nerves because regardless of what the person on the other end says, you're ready for it. Write down your responses to common objections. For example, know exactly what you're going to respond with when someone says they can't afford it or don't have time.

Write down some basic notes about the person you're calling (if you already know anything about them), as well as some notes about your goals for the call and how you can help the person. Look at your notes often throughout the call to keep yourself focused. Stay on task, and your call will likely run much more smoothly.

If it will help you, try writing down your introduction as well. Use that, at least until you've memorized it, to help you start off your call on the right foot. Always start with a quick introduction, then ask if they have time to chat. Don't jump into your pitch until you've been given permission. This will help you sound less pushy and more friendly. Here's an example:

Agent:

Hi, is this Mrs. Jones?

Client:

Yes, who's this?

Agent:

Hi Mrs. Jones, this is Greg Smith, I sell insurance in Wilson County, and I was hoping we could chat today. Do you have a few minutes?

It usually helps to reference the county, city, or state that you're selling in. People often prefer to buy from local salespeople.

Don't expect your prospect to talk too much...you're the one calling (and trying to sell to) them. You're the expert on the subject. Be sure to give them plenty of time to ask questions, and make sure you listen to every word they say...but be prepared to do most of the talking.

Know How to React to "No"

Chances are, you're going to hear quite a few "no's," and maybe a few unhappy comments. Rejection is part of the process, and it will only help you grow (as long as you let it). Remember, your prospect could have been having a bad day before you called, or they may have just gotten off the phone with another agent. You never know why the prospect is responding in a certain way.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to ask why, but in others, it won't. If someone is rude and hangs up on you, it may be wise to let that lead rest at least for a few months before trying again. However, if someone says, "I'm not really interested," you can at least respond with something like, "I understand, but I do want to make sure you are aware that you are eligible to change plans starting next month, so it's a good time to start familiarizing yourself with new options."

Chances are that the prospect will either say thanks and move on, or ask a question like, "Oh, I have new options?" which gives you a great opportunity to jump in.

Overcoming Common Objections

If you're new to this, you'll notice very quickly that you can fit the common objections you hear into three categories: finances, time, and necessity. You should never make the prospect feel wrong about their objection.

Avoid words like "but" and "have you considered." Instead, validate their concerns using the "feel, felt, found" approach. First, express your empathy for their situation, then explain how other clients have been in a similar situation, then express the solution that others have come to.

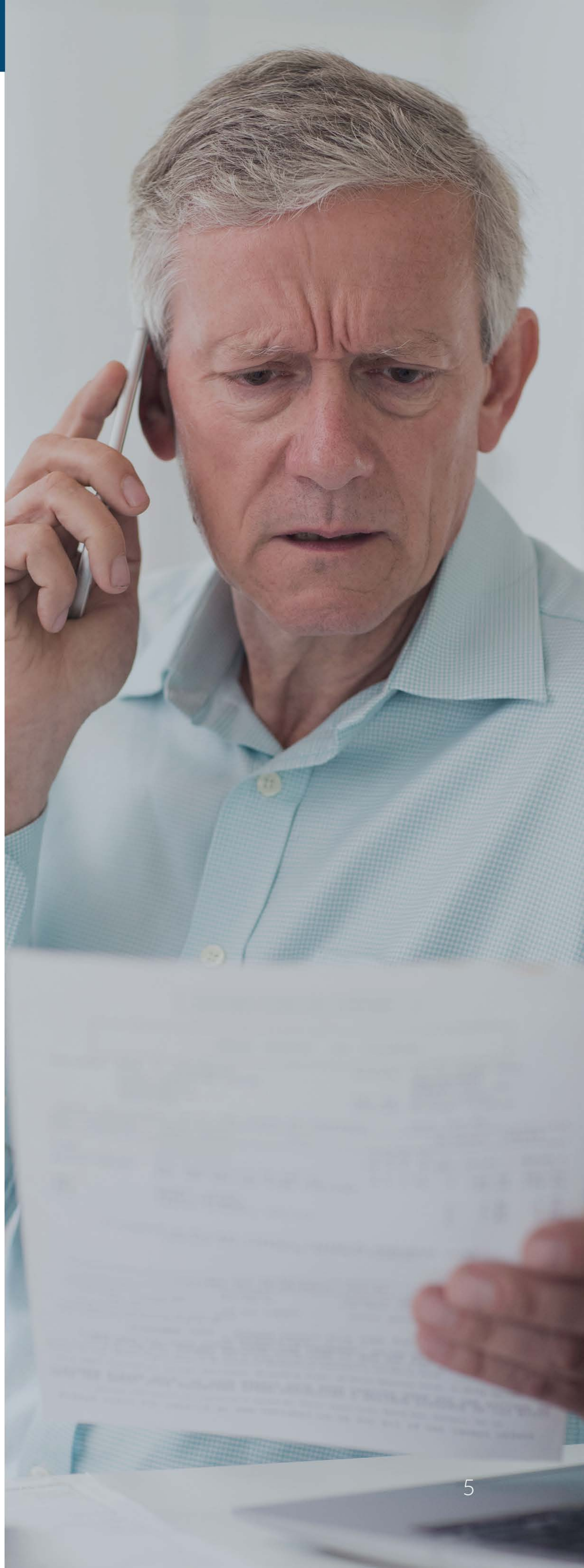
Here are the best ways to respond to common objections:

Finances: "I can't afford it" / "That sounds expensive"

When someone argues that they can't afford the plan you're selling, start with compassion, stating, "I understand, bills can be tough especially when they come up unexpectedly. I struggle at times myself, but I have found that it's always better to budget a small amount each month than to be hit with large unexpected expenses."

Then, ask them if the cost is truly the only issue, asking, "If we took cost out of the picture altogether, do you feel this product would be a great fit for your lifestyle?"

This will help you find out if the cost is truly the problem or if they were using finances as an excuse to get you off the phone. If the costs were NOT the problem, this is when you can get down to the true cause, and solve for it. If the costs were the problem, this is when you can start asking questions to determine whether they qualify for financial assistance or if there is a better option.





Time: “I need to think about it” / “I need to compare options” / “I need to talk to X”

Since switching insurance plans is a big decision for many families, you might hear that they need to speak with their spouse, need to think about it a little longer, or need to look at the options first. Just like in the financial example, you'll want to start by validating their concerns and making sure that they were telling the truth. Respond with, “I understand, this is a big decision. What exactly do you need to think about? Maybe I can speak to your concerns now.”

If the person didn't have any concerns to address, this would be a good time to say, “Ok, well then what we can do is start your application, and it won't go into effect until next month, so you have plenty of time to back out if you find something better.” If the person did have legitimate questions or concerns, stay on the phone until they are all addressed.

Necessity: “I'm not interested” / “I already have a policy” / “I'm happy with what I have”

Usually, people who say they are not interested are saying it because they already have coverage (or they think they do). However, that doesn't necessarily mean that they actually are in the best plan. In this case, start with the validation approach again, then switch to an inquisitive approach to find out the truth.

You may want to say, “That's great! You are doing better than most of the people I speak to. Do you mind if I ask how you picked the plan you're in? What do you like about it?”

Some people might not want to talk about it, and others might tell you. Either way, you can respond with, “Great, well I'm glad you're happy with that, but I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't let you know that there is actually another plan similar to yours that may be cheaper/may have more benefits.” Adjust this portion of the conversation depending on whether or not your plan is cheaper or better.



Next Steps

When you've made it through a phone call, immediately jot down some notes before you start the next one. Write down what their objections were, how interested they seemed, whether or not you set an appointment, etc. This will all be important later when it's time to sell. If you did make a sale over the phone, remember to jot those notes down, as well. It'll be embarrassing if you call a lead that you've already sold to asking if they're interested in a different plan a few weeks later.

Always remember that "no" is not personal, and objections are part of the process. With each call you make, you're on your way to becoming an even better salesperson.

You got this!

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