



# How To Make Sure Prospects Attend Your Phone Appointments

## Background

There is one very big difference between having a phone appointment with a sales prospect and a face-to-face appointment, but it's not the quality of the lead (they're the same).

The difference is in the increased likelihood of a phone meeting not going ahead in comparison to a face-to-face meeting. However, there is a straightforward process you can follow that will reduce this difference and, in many cases, eliminate it entirely.

Before explaining how to maximise attendance on your phone meetings, it is important to consider what happens when you attend a phone meeting compared with a face-to-face meeting.

For example, in a face-to-face meeting, you arrive at reception and let them know that you're there to see the prospect. The receptionist calls the prospect to let them know and if the prospect doesn't answer their phone, the receptionist will call their mobile and other people in the organisation to locate your prospect. They may be running a couple of minutes late, but they come to meet you and the meeting proceeds.

Contrast this with a phone meeting. You call the prospect and ask the receptionist to be put through to their extension. The receptionist transfers the call or if you've dialled them directly your ring through and because the prospect is not at their desk at that exact moment, it rings out or goes to their voicemail. You might leave a message for them and then you hang up. The meeting does not go ahead.

## So, what's different?

The difference is that in the face-to-face scenario, the receptionist actively seeks out your prospect to find them for you if they do not answer their phone. With the phone appointment, they are not doing this, and it affects the attendance rate for your phone meetings.

In a phone meeting, the fact that the prospect does not answer their phone is taken as evidence that they do not want to meet with you. But this is very often not the case - they might simply be at a colleague's desk, or making themselves a cup of coffee, visiting the bathroom or a prior meeting might have overrun. They only need to be running 1-2 minutes late and they will have missed your call.

## How to Overcome This

So how do you maximise attendance at your phone meetings? We've built a robust best practice process for phone meetings, based on what we've seen the most successful salespeople and teams do. The good news is that it's straightforward and all you have to do, is follow these 4 steps and you'll see a huge increase in the attendance rate for your phone meetings.



### 1. Send your prospect a meeting invitation – within 2 hours of the meeting being set

This might sound obvious, but you'd be surprised how often this step is skipped for phone meetings. Send a meeting invitation to the prospect as soon as the meeting is set or, if someone is setting appointments for you, as soon as you receive confirmation of the meeting. You want them to receive this while your company is still fresh in their mind and to ensure that it gets locked into their diaries (and into yours) before a competing meeting gets scheduled. Make sure to include your contact details and those of your organisation, in case they need to change the time at the last minute. And if you can, add an agenda for your call to ensure the time is utilised effectively.



### 2. Reconfirm the meeting - twice

Send a confirmation email to the prospect the day before the call. Then do this one more time on the morning of the call to ensure that your prospect is in the office – not away on leave, sick or called out of the office for another reason.



### 3. Get Reception to help

When you call and the prospect's phone rings out, rather than giving up at this point, call back to the receptionist and explain that you have a pre-arranged phone meeting booked with the prospect and ask them to locate the prospect for you. In most cases (especially when you have reconfirmed the meeting as above) the prospect will be nearby, and your meeting will go ahead as scheduled.

If your call goes to their voicemail, follow the same process but leave a voicemail message as well, saying you will call back in 5 or 10 minutes.



### 4. Organise / Reschedule

If something has come up and the prospect is genuinely not there, don't just leave it at that. Call again later in the day to set a new time. You can even send an updated invitation for a new time for your call, so this goes straight into their diary.

Remember that persistence is one of the keys to effective selling. You'll see that steps 2, 3 and 4 are all about persisting, rather than giving up, but they are not about being pushy.

If you apply this best practice process consistently you will find that you will rarely have cancelled or missed phone appointments.