

## Becoming a superstar in group ticket sales

**Welcome.** Your team wants to sell out every game. To do that, a critical part is usually *group sales*. To assist you in making more strategic sales to get more sellouts, we've prepared this *Group Salesperson's Handbook*.

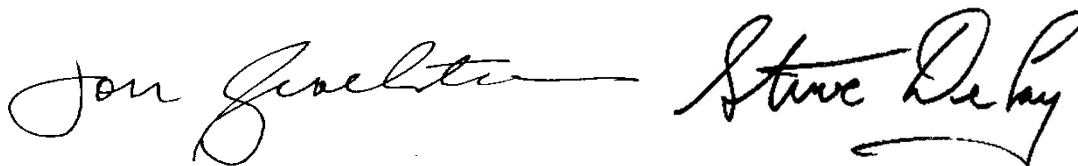
We want to accelerate your progress to success. In the *Group Salesperson's Handbook*, we have you working on the two most important aspects of group ticket sales that will lead you to increase your own sales.

**Part 1:** Selling new groups. We break down the group sales process from the first step of identifying the group's right decision maker and group leader to painting the picture, all the way through handling objections and making the sale.

**Part 2:** Once you made the sale to a new group, you want to make sure they come back year after year. We'll show you how to get groups to come back each year and steps to get those groups to buy more tickets or come more frequently.

We'll also discuss increasing referrals and tell you what type of groups are better to meet with face to face instead of just talk to over the phone.

Have fun. You'll enjoy the learning process on selling groups. And, you'll really enjoy the benefits of the updraft in your sales.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Jon Spoelstra' and the signature on the right is 'Steve DeLay'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jon Spoelstra

Steve DeLay

## **HOW THIS BOOKLET WORKS**

There are two sides to each page. The left side (what you're reading now) is me talking to you. The right side is you (see the word **You**) and what you're saying.

You don't see any words by 'you' because right now I'm doing all the talking. In fact, I'm already giving you some stage directions. My stage directions are on the right side of the page, in bold type and italicized. That means I want you to read them.

When you're talking, it will be the words that you would use with a group prospect. As you're talking, I'll be right here commenting on my side of the page. When I give you some 'stage directions', it will be in parenthesis on your side of the page.

As you go through your Group Sales Boot Camp, your Group Sales Manager will be going through this handbook with you. He will be using PowerPoint slides that we've provided to help teach this material to you.

The notes on the slides are the same as what's in this booklet so you don't need to copy the slides. However, you may want to add notes to this booklet on what your Group Sales Manager discusses to make it easier for you to remember and learn. Think of this booklet as your school textbook and your Group Sales Manager as the teacher just like back when you were in school.

**You:**

***(Stage directions: This is what my stage directions will look like. So, nod your head that you're paying attention.)***

# Part 1: Pursuit of the Right Group Leader

Finding the right group leader is the first key to really being successful in group sales. This key allows you to open the door to a sale. Without the right group leader, you could be meandering all over the place and end up not even making a sale.

*(Blank space on the right side means you're silent.)*

The ideal time for most teams to find the right group leader is even *before the traditional selling season starts*. In baseball this means you would start finding the right group leaders in September. Yep, that's at the tail end of your current playing season. In the NBA and NHL, finding the right group leader would start in March. Yep again, that's at the tail end of your current playing season.

It's critical to start finding the right group leader early because many groups plan their outings 9-12 months in advance. If you wait on searching out group leaders until a few months before your season starts, it's likely too late to get that group for this season.

Regardless of when you start, you can still use the strategies here. They are applicable for finding the right group leader before the selling season starts and during the selling season.

## ***THREE TYPES OF GROUPS***

There are three major categories of potential group sales for the Group Sales staff:

1. Churches.
2. Schools.
3. Youth sports.

A fourth type is businesses. However, most teams have their Outside Salespeople call exclusively on businesses.

**The Group Sales staff** calls exclusively on churches, schools, youth sports, and other miscellaneous groups; **The Outside Sales staff** calls exclusively on businesses.

The following few pages cover the possible groups within each organization.

*(Blank space means you're still silent.)*

## **POTENTIAL GROUPS FROM CHURCHES**

Within most churches, there are plenty of potential groups. The larger the congregation, the more varied groups there are. All of them plan outings for their particular group. Here are some of the possible groups for an individual church with descriptions for the more unique groups:

- **Congregation-wide fellowship event**
- **New Member Recruitment** – These groups use casual social outings to recruit new members.
- **Choir** – Children’s, Youth, Adult choirs are good candidates to sing the national anthem or perform at halftime.
- **Sunday School Program**
- **Seniors Group**
- **Married/Couples Ministry**
- **Singles Group**
- **College Group**
- **Youth Group** – This is usually children age 12-18, a very active group.
- **Vacation Bible School**- Primarily during the summer, this group is good for baseball teams.
- **MOPS** – (Mothers of Preschoolers)
- **Mother’s Day Out program**
- **Sports programs** – Many churches organize youth sports programs, and are always looking for outings at sporting events.
- **Volunteer Ministry**
- **Faculty/Staff Outing** – Make sure with any group outing to include faculty and staff. Larger churches could have up to 100 employees.

*(Stage Directions: Yep, you’re still silent waiting in the wings, but pretty soon you’ll be on stage.)*

## **POTENTIAL GROUPS FROM SCHOOLS**

Like with churches, schools also have plenty of different possible groups. Most likely, there is a different person in charge for each of these possible groups:

- **Entire School District** – A district-wide outing would most likely be organized through the superintendent’s office.
- **PTA/PTO** – Primarily in elementary and middle schools.
- **Individual schools/classes** – This could be a reward or recognition program.
- **Teachers & Faculty**
- **Student Clubs**
  - Student Council
  - National Honor Society
  - DECA/BPA
  - Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA)
  - ROTC/JROTC
- **Band**
- **Sports Teams**
- **Dad’s Club / Mother & Son group**

*(Blank space means you’re still silent.)*

Here are some potential reasons why they might do a group event:

- Community Night for the entire town
- Family Night for students and their parents
- Field Trip – Day game
- Fundraiser (PTA, Athletics)
- Teacher Appreciation
- Student Incentive/Rewards
- On-Field Performance
- National Anthem
- ROTC & JROTC Presenting Colors

## **POTENTIAL GROUPS FROM YOUTH SPORTS**

You should, of course, look to youth sports teams that play the same sport your team does. You'll want to dig deeply within each sports league and within each city. Don't just settle for talking to the league President. Consider the following as good group outing candidates:

- League-wide event
- Individual teams
- Any Youth Sport looking for a fundraising opportunity.
- Local Tournaments in town looking for something to do in the evenings
- Cheer/Dance/Gymnastics Squads – They might be able to perform at halftime or during pre-game
- Summer Day Camps
- School Day Care Centers
- Church Leagues

*(Blank space means you're still silent.)*

Here's why a Youth Sports team or league might consider a group event:

- Fundraiser
- Team Banquet / Recognition
- End of season celebration
- Volunteer Appreciation
- Field trip opportunity – Camps

## TIPS

1. **Pick one type of group to call a day.** Because of the differences in the three types of groups, we recommend that you call *one group type* per day.

For instance, call just schools on one day, call churches on another day, and call youth sports on yet another.

By doing this, you'll quickly get in sync with that type of group and be able to get the information faster.

2. **The example in this handbook is schools.** However, look at the footnotes for how the language would change slightly when calling a church or youth organization.

*(Stage direction: Get ready, clear your voice, you've just dialed a phone number and it's ringing.)*

**BRNGGGGGGGGGGG...**



# **BRNGGGGGGGGGG...**

SOMEBODY: "Hello?"

You're on! ⇨⇨

YOU: "Hi, I'm the Group Accounts Manager with the Big City Kangaroos and my name is \_\_\_\_\_."<sup>1</sup>

### **FOOTNOTES**

<sup>1</sup>Most people give their name first and then their company. We reverse that. Your team's name is far more recognizable than your name (unless your name is Elvis Presley or the same as a famous somebody). So, use your title first, team name second, then your name. We used the Big City Kangaroos here but you, of course, would insert your team's name.

<sup>2</sup>For a church, you would say "Who organizes group outings for your youth groups or seniors or choir...." For a youth sports organization you would say, "Who organizes group outings for your teams or leagues, etc."

The reason I'm calling is I'm looking for the persons who would plan group outings at your school."<sup>2</sup>

*(Stage direction: You might get connected right away to a group leader at the school, but you also might be asked more questions.)*

SOMEBODY: "What do you mean?"

YOU: "Well, who organizes group outings for your school, for the PTA or band or a sports team?"<sup>2</sup> You know, it could be just a group activity or it could be a fundraiser. Who would handle those events?"

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>3</sup> Occasionally, a receptionist or whoever answers the phone won't be very helpful, but that's okay. This isn't the time to comment on the receptionist's social skills. Just ask who the biggest sports fan in the office is. That person will most likely be thrilled to talk to someone from your team.

<sup>4</sup> You're in the mode of gathering information now. It started with the receptionist. If the receptionist answered your initial question about who does group outings at the school by saying, "Oh, that would be Jane Smith." Ask what groups does she organize? It might be "She does fundraisers with the band." You're now starting to build a database for that organization. When we first did this with the New Jersey Nets, we *averaged* three names per organization. In some organizations, you could get 10 or more names of group leaders.

SOMEBODY: "I wouldn't know."<sup>3</sup>

YOU: "Well, who is the biggest sports fan in the office? Could you connect me to that person?"

***(Stage direction: If you get switched to the biggest sports fan, you can re-ask what you first asked the receptionist. If the biggest sports fan is not available, get the name and direct dial number so you can call back later.)***

***BRNGGGGGGGGGG...***

ALLEGED GROUP LEADER: "Hello?"

YOU: "I was transferred to you as the person who coordinates group outings for the \_\_\_\_\_ (school, class, sports team).<sup>4</sup> I'm the Group Accounts Manager for the Kangaroos, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, I wanted to spend a few minutes to learn more about the type of outings you do.

**Q1.** Have you ever been out to a Kangaroos game?"

***(Stage direction: You need a frame of reference to know how much they know about your team. If they are unfamiliar, you'll need to give them a little background of your team, stadium, etc.)***

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>5</sup> The goal with this question is to get some background on what type of outings they have done, how much they've spent and what they like best. The purpose is to get an understanding of the pros and cons of past outings. File this information away for when you make your recommendation for a Kangaroos outing.

<sup>6</sup> You need a sense of how big of a group outing is possible. This will help you recommend a particular seating area. If it's a large group, it might be a good idea to meet the group leader face to face. Our rule of thumb for meetings is if the group is 300+.

<sup>7</sup> Be prepared to throw out some suggestions based on the type of group. For a church, it might be fellowship, the choir singing the anthem, or a fundraiser. For a school, you might suggest fundraising.

## QUESTION LIST

YOU: "I wanted to ask you a few questions to better understand what type of group outings your organization usually does and see if there is something that might be exciting for your group to come to a Kangaroos game.

**Q2.** Can you give me an idea of what type of events you have done in the past and what criteria is most important to you?"<sup>5</sup>

***(Stage direction: You keep notes on each answer. Believe me, you'll use your notes to help get the sale.)***

**Q3.** "Tell me a little about those experiences. What did you like and dislike about them? What would you do to make the experience better?"<sup>5</sup>

**Q4.** "How many people usually attend? Did you include spouses and families? Would you consider that a good turnout? How many total members do you have?"<sup>6</sup>

**Q5.** "What are the goals you like to accomplish with your outings?"<sup>7</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>8</sup> You want to find out what day of the week and time of the year is best. This will help you zero-in on one or two games to make a recommendation.

<sup>9</sup> Now you are starting to focus on pricing. This will help you determine what seats to recommend based on who pays and the budget.

<sup>10</sup> Here's where you can help. You can suggest ways to spread the word based on what you know has worked for other groups. You can make emailable or printable flyers for them. Most group leaders don't have good resources to spread the word. For the group to be successful, you'll need to provide some help and support.

<sup>11</sup> You need to know who else can weigh-in. If there is a committee, offer to come to the next committee meeting and present the team's group outing options so you can answer any questions. The decision-making process may take a while. That's another reason for you to start calling new prospects early. You don't want to miss a big group opportunity.

**Q6.** “What time of year does your group prefer to do outings? Do you prefer weekends or weekdays? Do you want to focus on a big time opponent or is cost the deciding factor? Our season runs from October to April. If you were going to do an outing with the Kangaroos, what timeframe would fit best with your schedule?”<sup>8</sup>

**Q7.** “When you do an outing, who usually pays for it? Do the members pay, does the organization pay, or is the tab split?”<sup>9</sup>

**Q8.** “What price range would you like to stay in to fit the organization members' budget?”<sup>9</sup>

**Q9.** “When you do an outing, how do you usually promote it? Do you use email, flyers, newsletters? How would we get the word out and information in the hands of every single member of your organization?”<sup>10</sup>

**Q10.** “How are decisions made for outings? Do you decide? Is there a committee? Do you have to present outings to anyone? How long does the decision-making process usually take?”<sup>11</sup>

## ***MAKING THE RECOMMENDATION***

You now have most of the information that you need to proceed and make a recommendation.

Time to get that new group prospect locked in to a game!

Proceed on →→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→→

YOU: “Based on what you’ve told me, I have a terrific idea for you. Here’s what we could do for you.”<sup>12</sup>

### ***FOOTNOTE***

<sup>12</sup> The key is painting a picture of how the outing can help the group accomplish their goals and how much fun it can be. Here are some of the details you need to make sure you go over.

1. Pick a game date on the right day of the week and during the right time of the year.
2. Recommend ticket prices and amenities that fit with their goals.
3. Let them know how you can help them promote the outing with flyers, etc.

## **NOTES**

Let's go through an example of how this could sound. I've included some value-added stuff to give you an idea how to make the outing sound fun. For this example, we'll assume you are calling a church that is interested in a youth-oriented event.

YOU: "How does this sound? You're interested in bringing out the youth band in November. I would recommend our first Saturday night game in November. We play the Los Angeles Clippers. They've got two huge stars the kids will love in Chris Paul and Blake Griffin. In fact, Griffin won the NBA's Dunk Contest a couple years ago. Kids love him. We can arrange some good seats for the kids for \$17/ticket. With this, they can also get a \$22 Kangaroos baseball cap for free. If you'd like, we can include a hotdog and soda coupon they can redeem at the concession stand for an additional \$5. This way, the kids see a terrific opponent on a Saturday night, get a free gift, and if you'd like, can also get food and drink included. All for a terrific price. The kids will have a great time hanging out together. With 100 kids in the band, we can reserve seats for each of them with just a \$100 deposit.

**Q11.** Does that sound like an outing your group would enjoy?"



*There's a possible fork in the road...*

## **1<sup>ST</sup> FORK IN THE ROAD**

The question you asked, “Does that sound like an outing your group would enjoy?” leads to two possible forks in the road:

1. A sale with some solvable problems.
2. Objections to a sale.

Let’s handle these ‘forks in the road’ separately and in order.

Let’s start with a sale with some solvable problems ⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨⇨

### **FOOTNOTES**

<sup>13</sup> The group may say they need to pay by check for the deposit. That’s okay as long as you have some time before the game. Your goal here is to get a commitment for the group outing and get some type of down payment. If they can’t put a deposit down right away because others are involved in the decision-making process, you need to provide them with all the details on the group so they can get it approved.

## **A SALE WITH SOLVABLE PROBLEMS**

YOU: “Does that sound like an outing your group would enjoy?”

GROUP LEADER: “Yes, I think we’d enjoy that.”

YOU: “Terrific. I’m glad you think this will be fun. All we need to do to place your order and hold seats is put down a deposit of \$100 (or 10% if it’s a larger order). I usually recommend being a bit conservative on the number of tickets so we don’t hold too many. The final payment is due 30 days (adjust this based on your team’s policies) before the event. What credit card would you like to use for the deposit?”<sup>13</sup>



## **FOOTNOTES**

<sup>14</sup> Many times, others will be involved. That's normal. If you can be part of the meeting to present the options, that's ideal. You'll be able to present the group outing options better than anyone else. You want to make sure any questions are answered on the spot. If your outing is presented in a way that doesn't sound exciting and interesting for the group, they will shoot it down on the spot. Likewise, if there are too many questions brought up, the group leader may decide it's not worth their effort to coordinate anything and get answers to all these questions.

If you can't be part of the meeting, you want to find out when the meeting is going to take place and schedule a specific date and time for a follow-up call right after the meeting so nothing slows down the process. Include that follow-up call date and time in your email to the group leader.

GROUP LEADER: "I'll need to get approval, of course, from the group."

YOU: "I understand that you have to check with a few people. Let me do this, I'll send you an email with a summary of all the details of what we discussed. I can't hold any seats until we receive a deposit. I can also include a few sample flyers we've made for other organizations so you can see what we can do. Would it be helpful if I joined you in presenting the options? This way, you don't have to answer all the questions. I can make your life easier. When do you think you'll talk to the other decision makers? Let's schedule a time to talk via phone right after that meeting."<sup>14</sup>

## 2<sup>nd</sup> FORK IN THE ROAD

You will face some objections when talking to the group leader. These aren't usually tough objections like a flat-out NO. For some unknown reason, the first objection often isn't the most serious objection. However, you have to work your way through each objection as if it were the most important one.

When you receive an objection, you want to make sure the prospect feels you are acknowledging it. You also want to make sure you have a solution to help overcome the objection. Here are some simple steps to take for any objection.

1. **Pause for a moment.** There were a couple objections I really *loved* to get thrown at me. It seemed my answer always worked. When I got thrown my favorite objections, I had to show patience. I paused for a moment. If I jumped right on the objection, I could quickly scare off the prospect. So, whatever objection is thrown at you—your favorite objection or not—pause for a moment and pretend like you're thinking.
2. **Gather more information.** Even when I know *exactly* how to answer an objection, I ask for some additional information on the objection. For example, you can simply say, "Interesting, how do you mean?" The prospect will naturally expand on their worry or concern. This provides you more information to be able to respond to the objection.
3. **Acknowledge the objection.** Use the *Feel- Felt- Found* method. "I can understand why you might feel that way. I had a couple other clients who felt the same way at first. Here's what they found..."

## OBJECTIONS

**(Stage direction. This is just a time-out while I explain a little bit about answering objections.)**



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>15b</sup> With almost any objection you would ask, “How do you mean?” just to get better clarification.

<sup>16</sup> By asking another question at the end of your response, you’ll get the group leader thinking about something else. In this case, they most likely have had other outings where the group drove a ways. By having them bring that up, it will help alleviate the concerns about distance.

There are certainly plenty of other objections your team will face. Spend some time thinking through all of the possible objections and what your answer would be for each of them. Once you have all the answers nailed down to any objections, you should have no trouble escalating your group sales dramatically.

## **‘YOUR BUILDING IS TOO FAR’ OBJECTION**

GROUP LEADER: “Your arena is too far away. I’m not sure our members will drive that far.”

YOU: “How do you mean?” <sup>15b</sup>

GROUP LEADER: (Clarifies the objection).

YOU: “I can understand that, but keep in mind we’re not talking about coming to a weekday game when traffic is rugged or people have to work the next day. We can focus only on a Saturday evening game or Sunday afternoon game and include food in the package so they don’t have to worry about stopping for dinner on the way. How far have you traveled for other group outings in the past?”<sup>16</sup>

## Part 2: Increasing Renewal Sales

With practice and persistence, you will be able to ferret out the right group leader in prospective groups and make new sales. This influx of new groups will be terrific for your team and, of course, for you. What makes it even better is one thing: renewing most of your groups from last season.

Adding the new groups on top of the renewing groups produces dynamic results.

The key to renewing a group season after season is to have the right system. Here is a five-step process for Group Renewal:

1. **Phone.** You call potentially renewing groups three weeks *before* selling season starts.
2. **‘Early bird’ personal letter.** The team sends out an ‘early bird’ letter under your name to your potentially renewing groups two weeks **before** the official group renewal letter.
3. **Phone follow-up.** A gentle reminder about the ‘early bird’ letter. This call would happen a day or two after the group leader received the ‘Early Bird’ personal letter.
4. **Group Ticket mailing.** This is sent to all groups that attended a game in the past three years.
5. **Renewal follow-up.**
  - One to two weeks following the Group Ticket mailing, every one of your non-renewed groups that you haven’t

*(Stage direction: Yep, you’re back to being silent for awhile. But, don’t relax too much because you could be called on in a moment’s notice.)*

already reached needs to be called again.

- 30 to 60 days after the Group Ticket Mailing, the team should send a follow-up letter to each non-renewed group. This letter would be a friendly reminder that groups have been on sale and inventory is becoming limited for next season. Follow up the letter with a phone call.

This is what you would say on your first phone call to a potentially renewing group. ⇔⇔⇔⇔⇔⇔⇔⇔⇔⇔⇔⇔⇔⇔⇔⇔

**FOOTNOTE**

<sup>17</sup> You want to know what the group liked best in order to gather the information to make a good recommendation for next season. Your goal is to get them talking. They may talk about the price, seat locations, food/hospitality, or other special experiences. File this information away. You’ll use it later to make a recommendation.

YOU: “Hello, I’m the Group Accounts Manager with the Big City Kangaroos, this is \_\_\_\_\_ . I wanted to say thank you again for bringing a group out to our arena last year and let you know we’ve begun taking deposits for next season.

**Q1.** How did you and your group enjoy the game last year?”

***(Stage direction: Group Leader gives a POSITIVE feedback.)***

YOU: “That’s terrific. That’s what we like to hear. What did your group like most about the outing?” <sup>17</sup>

***(Stage direction: Group Leader gives a NEGATIVE feedback.)***

## FOOTNOTE

<sup>18</sup> You want them to tell you what was negative, but you want to subtly position the question so it doesn't put them in a position to rant and complain. Right now, you are listening to get feedback so your recommendation for next season overcomes last year's problems or issues.

YOU: "I'm sorry to hear that. What was it that didn't go as well as you wanted? How can we make it better for this coming season?"<sup>18</sup>

YOU: "Well, I appreciate the feedback. I think we can make this coming season even better for you.

By now, you should have received our letter about next year's group outings for the Kangaroos. Because you're a preferred buyer, you have the first opportunity to reserve your group before tickets go on sale to non-preferred buyers and the general public.

Before we get into details, let me make sure our information is updated.

**Q2.** Will you be the group coordinator for this event again next season?"

- a. (Stage direction: If yes, confirm you have the right contact information.)**
- b. (Stage direction: If no, find out who will be coordinating the group. You: "No problem. I can give them a call. Would you be willing to make an introduction to them so they are expecting my call?"**

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>19</sup> Ask this in case you didn't get enough detail in your introduction, especially if the group leader said something like, 'it was fun,' without much detail. The group could be interested in different seat locations, a different day of the week, a different price point, or maybe a party deck/suite instead of regular seating. It's okay to suggest some options here based on their previous comments on how last year went.

<sup>20</sup> The purpose of this question is to get them moving forward on making a decision for next year's group outing. Even if you don't have your schedule for next season, you can still take reservations for particular games such as your biggest game of the year or a popular holiday game or a Saturday night in November.

<sup>21</sup> This is an upgrade opportunity for you. The event may have gone well enough that more people want to attend this year. Or, they may want better seats in a higher priced area. Listen closely so you can make the right recommendation.

## MAKING A RECOMMENDATION

You've probably gathered enough information to make a pretty good recommendation. So, go ahead⇒⇒⇒⇒⇒⇒⇒⇒⇒⇒

<sup>22</sup> Your 'waiting list' happens to be all the groups in your database that didn't come out last year.

**Q3.** "Is there anything else you would like to do differently for this year's outing that would make it better?"<sup>19</sup>

**Q4.** "Last year, your group event was on (day of the week and date), against (opponent). Do you want a big-time opponent again on a weekend/weekday or would you prefer something else?"<sup>20</sup>

**Q5.** "Last year, you had \_\_\_\_\_ come to the game and sat in the \_\_\_\_\_ (insert the seating area here). Was that the right number of people for you? Is there an opportunity for more people to participate this coming year?"<sup>21</sup>

YOU: "Because you're a preferred buyer from this past season, I can reserve your spot before we put group tickets on sale to our waiting list.<sup>22</sup> I want to make sure you get what you want. Based on what you've told me, here's what I would recommend we do in order to get you on the list early enough to get your outing secured. \_\_\_\_\_<sup>23</sup> As soon as we have our schedule, I will call you and we'll finalize the details so you get exactly what you want. All we'll need to do to reserve your spot is get a small deposit of \$100 down."



## FOOTNOTE

<sup>23</sup> Make your recommendation for a game or estimated time of year (if no schedule), day of the week, ticket product, number of tickets, price point, etc.

<sup>24</sup> Your next step is to continue to push forward with the sales process. By sending them the follow-up email with everything you discussed, you make sure nothing is left out. Also, by asking for a specific date and time to follow up, you help ensure that they will discuss your group outing with the other decision makers.

<sup>25</sup> This is just a gentle reminder without being too pushy. You are also volunteering to help in any way possible to move the process along without appearing to be a hammer and tong salesperson.

**Q6.** “We can put it on the credit card we have on file. Does that work for you? As soon as we have the schedule, we can set up the arrangements for full payment.”

***a. (Stage direction: If Yes, Hooray, take the deposit through your normal process and make a note to call them as soon as your schedule comes out.)***

***b. (Stage direction: If No, they may have to get approvals from others or talk to a committee.)***

YOU: “No problem. I will send you a follow-up email summarizing everything we just talked about.

**Q7.** When do you think you’ll talk to the others? Why don’t I mark down to call you the next day to follow up? When is the best time to reach you on that day?”<sup>24</sup>

GROUP LEADER: “We’ll need a couple of months to make a decision.”

## FOLLOW-UP STEPS

Once you have the group agreeing to do an outing for your team, you're not done. This could be a renewal or a new group. Unless they've paid in full for the tickets, you'll need to regularly follow up with the Group Leader to make sure they are actively promoting the outing and the members are buying tickets for the outing.

Here are the six steps you should use in following up.

1. **Follow-Up email.** You'll send a follow up email to the group leader on the day that the group agrees to do an outing. This can be a fairly standard template so you aren't recreating it for every group lead. The email template would include:

YOU: "I can understand the process. Keep in mind that you have preferred-buyer status because you came out last year. You'll want to make sure to take advantage of that to get the best seats to the game you want. Also, final payment isn't due for a while. Is there anything I can do to help you speed up the decision-making process so you don't fall behind any new buyers?"<sup>25</sup>

GROUP LEADER: "No, we just need time to organize."

YOU: "OK, I'll email you our schedule and all the details we discussed and then will follow up with you later."

YOU: "You'll get that email from me in a little while. As soon as you (talk to the committee, get approval, etc.) we'll talk so we can make your reservation. Remember, all group packages will go on sale to everyone else soon and the best games always sell out first.

Thanks again for bringing your group out last season, and I look forward to working with you again this season."

- Game date and time (if you have the schedule).
  - Opponent.
  - Number of tickets or hospitality space reserved and price per person. If they reserved hospitality space like a suite and have food, include a menu.
  - Total amount due and due date.
  - Seating chart.
  - Flyers to help them promote the event (or samples of other group's flyers if the group is still deciding on the specific event they want to do).
  - Picture of the group hat if it's included.
  - Your contact information: email address, office number.
2. **Staying in touch.** If the group's game is more than a few weeks away, stay in touch with the group leader, especially if they are collecting money from the members. You want to make sure tickets are selling well so they hit the number you've reserved for them. You don't want a big surprise a couple weeks before the game and have them tell you they only sold 20 out of the 100 tickets you reserved for them. Reach out to them via phone every few weeks to gauge progress. You may also find out they need to add tickets if the sales are going well.
3. **Collecting final payment.** You want to be paid in full at least 30 days before the event. If you haven't received payment, the final step is for the ticket office to send out the final invoice for the number of tickets they need. Once payment is received,

***(Stage direction: Yep, you're back to being silent for awhile.)***

tickets are sent out.

4. **Game Night.** On the night of their game, make sure to visit the group leader early in the game and introduce yourself. Give the group leader your cell phone number so they can reach you during the game if any problems come up. Make sure they are enjoying themselves. If you have some Kangaroos goodies, give them to the group leader as a thank you.
5. **Post Game.** The next morning, send a personalized thank you letter to the group leader. Don't just send an email. Hand-written thank you notes have become a lost art. If you send one, you'll stand out more than anyone else who just sends an email. If you do a group leader survey, this is a good time to ask them to participate.
6. **Getting them to come back this season.** Hopefully, because you started calling groups early, you were able to strategically book the group for an early-season game. After about two weeks, put in a call and let them know you have a special offer for a game later in the season, just for returning groups. See if you can get them to come a second time. Also, since you know they enjoyed the game, now is a good time to ask for additional referrals.

# Predicting Success

Over the years, we've seen various degrees of success from our Group Sales staff. Some have turned out to be downright superstars. Most have done very well. A small few didn't fare as well.

When we took an overview of all these group salespeople there was one factor that could predict success. Unlike unearthly athletic ability in some players, the factor to success for group salespeople is easily attainable. Because it's so easily attainable, success in group sales then *becomes a choice*.

You *choose* to become successful, or you *choose* not to be as successful.

That one factor to success is *time*.

How do you use your time? Are you efficient or do you routinely waste it?

If you *choose* to use your time efficiently, here's what we recommend:

1. **Preparing the night before.** Your team will want you to make a minimum of 70 phone calls a day. This could be finding the right group leader or selling a renewal. Plan those 70 phone calls that you are going to make tomorrow, at the end of the day today. The end of the day is usually down time for sales. Use it to *plan* for tomorrow. Don't use the more productive morning time to shuffle papers around 'planning' who you're going to call next.
2. **Set up your day in blocks of time.** Make this a routine; make this schedule predictable. The following is an example of one group

***(Stage direction: Pay attention to this stuff. It is the blueprint for you to become successful.)***

salesperson's schedule:

- 8:00 – 8:30 School Principals
- 8:30 – 11:30 Churches
- 1:00 – 4:00 Youth Sports Leagues
- 4:00 – 5:20 PTA Parents
- 5:20 Set up and prepare tomorrow

3. **Laser focus on phone calls.** When calling a friend, you could be sprawled out on the couch watching TV. Because you're making so many phone calls in a day, it becomes more important to do the following:

- Turn off email notifications to avoid distraction.
- Do not allow outside factors (like the Internet) to throw off your concentration.
- Use Outlook or CRM To Do List to stay on track.
- Keep your Excel trackers updated or notes in CRM.
- Concentrate on one group type at a time. It becomes easier to answer questions and overcome objections when you're immersed in one group type.

You choose how to use your time. You could be efficient or highly wasteful. You improve your degree of success by using your time efficiently. So, use it that way, and let's have some fun.

# The Sales Pitch

**BRNGGGGGGGGGG...**

SOMEBODY: “Hello?”

YOU: “Hi, I’m the Group Accounts Manager with the Big City Kangaroos, my name is

\_\_\_\_\_.”

The reason I’m calling is I’m looking for the person who would plan group outings at your school.”

***(Stage direction: You might get connected right away to a group leader at the school, but you also might be asked more questions.)***

SOMEBODY: “What do you mean?”

YOU: “Well, who organizes group outings for your school, or the PTA or band or a sports team? You know, it could be just a group activity or it could be a fundraiser. Who would handle those events?”

YOU: (after you’re connected to the supposed group leader) “I wanted to ask you a few questions to better understand what type of group outings your organization usually does and see if there is something that might be exciting for your group to come to a Kangaroos game.

**Q2.** Can you give me an idea of what type of events you have done in the past and what criteria is most important to you?”

***(Stage direction: You keep notes on each answer. Believe me, you'll use your notes to help get the sale.)***

**Q3.** “Tell me about those experiences. What did you like and dislike about them? What would you do to make the experience better?”

**Q4.** “How many people usually attend? Did you include spouses and families? Would you consider that a good turnout? How many total members do you have?”

**Q5.** “What are the goals you like to accomplish with your outings?”

**Q6.** “What time of year does your group prefer to do outings? Do you prefer weekends or weekdays? Do you want to focus on a big time opponent or a special entertainment act? Our season runs from October to April. If you were going to do an outing with the Kangaroos, what timeframe would fit best with your schedule?”

**Q7.** “When you do an outing, who usually pays for it? Do the members pay, does the organization pay, or is the tab split?”

**Q8.** “What price range would you like to stay in to fit the organization members’ budget?”

**Q9.** “When you do an outing, how do you usually promote it? Do you use email, flyers, newsletters? How would we get the word out and information in the hands of every single member of your organization?”

**Q10.** “How are decisions made for outings? Do you decide? Is there a committee? Do you have to present outings to anyone? How long does the decision-making process usually take?”

Can you give me an idea of what type of events you have done in the past and what criteria is most important to you?”

***1<sup>ST</sup> FORK IN THE ROAD*** *(when you don't have a schedule yet and the group leader doesn't want to put down a deposit).*



YOU: “It sure has been nice talking to you and I appreciate the time you have given me. Our schedule comes out in about \_\_\_\_\_ month(s). When we do get the schedule, I’ll give you a call back and see if we can work out something that is perfect for your group.”

**2<sup>nd</sup> FORK IN THE ROAD** (when you do have a schedule and can proceed to selling).

YOU: “Based on what you’ve told me, I have a great idea for you. Here’s what we could do for you.”

YOU: “How does this sound? You’re interested in bringing out the band in November. I would recommend our first Saturday night game in November. We play the Los Angeles Clippers. They’ve got two huge stars the kids will love in Chris Paul and Blake Griffin. In fact, Griffin won the NBA’s Dunk Contest a couple years ago. Kids love him. We can arrange some good seats for the kids for \$17/ticket. With this, they can also get a \$22 Kangaroos baseball cap for free. If you’d like, we can include a hotdog and soda coupon they can redeem at the concession stand for an additional \$5. This way, the kids see a terrific opponent on a Saturday night, get a free gift, and if you’d like, can also get food and drink included. All for a terrific price. The kids will have a great time hanging out together. With 100 kids in the band, we can reserve seats for each of them with just a \$100 deposit for the entire group.

Does that sound like an outing your group would enjoy?”

**ANOTHER FORK IN THE ROAD** (a sale with solvable problems).

GROUP LEADER: “Yes, I think we’d enjoy that.”

YOU: “Terrific. I’m glad you think this will be fun. All we need to do to place your order and hold seats is put down a deposit of \$100 (or 10% if it’s a larger order). I usually recommend being a bit conservative on the number of tickets so we don’t hold too many. The final

payment is due 30 days (adjust this based on your team's policies) before the event. What credit card would you like to use for the deposit?"

GROUP LEADER: "I'll need to get approval, of course, from the group."

YOU: "I understand that you have to check with a few people. Let me do this, I'll send you an email with a summary of all the details of what we discussed. I can't hold any seats until we receive a deposit. I can also include a few sample flyers we've made for other organizations so you can see what we can do. Would it be helpful if I joined you in presenting the options? This way, you don't have to answer all the questions. I can make your life easier. When do you think you'll talk to the other decision makers? Let's schedule a time to talk via phone right after that meeting."

### ***ANOTHER FORK IN THE ROAD (a potential sale rife with objections).***

#### **'COST TOO MUCH' OBJECTION**

GROUP LEADER: "Well, I'm afraid this just costs too much."

YOU: "How do you mean?"

GROUP LEADER: "We don't have enough money in the budget for another group outing."

YOU: "I can understand that, but I had a couple of other clients that had the same situation, and they found a different solution. They had their organization members paying a large part of the ticket price. I can help by providing marketing materials to you to get the word out. Our lowest price seats are \$15. Would your members be willing to pay that amount for a night out?"

## ***'YOUR BUILDING IS TOO FAR'* OBJECTION**

GROUP LEADER: "Your arena is too far away. I'm not sure our members will drive that far."

YOU: "I can understand that, but keep in mind we're not talking about coming to a weekday game when traffic is rugged and people have to work. We can focus only on a Saturday evening game or Sunday afternoon game and include food in the package so they don't have to worry about stopping for dinner on the way. How far have you traveled for other group outings in the past?"

## ***'WE DON'T LIKE YOUR SPORT'* OBJECTION**

GROUP LEADER: "None of our members are really basketball (or whatever your sport is) fans. I'm not sure they would be interested."

YOU: "I have a number of groups that aren't really big basketball fans. But, they go to one game a year and they come out for the social outing, the cheering and the camaraderie. A group outing is really a night so your members get to know each other better, have fun together. The basketball game is merely the stage to have fun."