

## 5 Tips to Improve Sales Responsiveness

In the world of professional sales, our priorities can be identified by how we spend our time - the amount of time we devote to customers and, just as importantly, our *response time* when customers reach out to us. In fact, there is no greater indication of respect and commitment than our responsiveness to customers. But in an age of unrelenting calls, texts and emails, it can be extremely challenging to stay on top of every customer engagement. Here are tips to ensure optimal responsiveness for a superior customer experience:

1. Leverage out-of-office email and text notifications to let customers know when you are temporarily unavailable. For example, if you reached out to a vendor account rep with a question and got no response within four days, you would feel ignored. And then, at the start of the following week, you get an email reply explaining that the person was on vacation the previous week. Although helpful, this late response still reveals a lack of thoughtfulness. An out-of-office notification would have avoided both negative impressions.
2. Proactively notify customers when you are going to be out of touch or out of the office on vacation or other extended period of time.
3. Establish a provisional contact person when you are unavailable, so customers always have a human being to contact for assistance. Make it a point to introduce customers to your backup person(s) and share key background and skills to instill confidence and cultivate engagement between the two parties.
4. Include support contact information in every out-of-office email or text notification, and in your standard email signature, for easy reference.
5. For pockets of time in which you are unavailable, forward your phone to your support contact, so that customers engage with a human rather than your voicemail.

Of course, these tactical provisions only matter if they are accompanied by a sincere commitment to exemplary customer care and responsiveness. That means minimizing the times that we are unavailable, picking up the phone whenever feasible, answering emails sooner than later and articulating to our support contact person(s) the priority we place on responsiveness to customers. Following this philosophy and implementing these simple steps can keep customer responsiveness as a sales strength rather than a costly liability.