

Effective, Professional Phone Strategies

Your school's growth and profit potential depends on every link in the revenue chain starting with your marketing and continuing with the first phone contact. Your phone procedures may be the most important link because that is your first opportunity to talk with prospects one-on-one to make that all important lasting, professional impression. NAPMA offers professional proven scripts already done for you to help solve that problem.

Far too many school owners overlook the value of professional phone procedures and how they directly affect appointment ratios and all other revenue-generating steps downstream. Frankly, many schools are without adequate staff or staff training and often do a poor job handling prospect calls. At NAPMA, we call martial arts schools every day, and more than 75% don't answer their phone when prospects are most likely to call (between 10:00am and 1:00pm). Of those that do, an overwhelming majority do a poor job handling the call effectively.

Every time your staff members handle prospects' call incorrectly or you miss prospects' calls or they leave voicemails, you are losing business, and worse of all, you missed out on changing someone's life for the better.

Your prospects are much more likely to schedule appointments if they're able to talk with someone—and if that someone is fluent with a professional phone procedure and script.

Here is an outline of the fundamental stages in a professional phone script.

The Art of Telephone Aikido

When someone calls your school, it's VERY unlikely that they fully understand what your school, and the martial arts can really do for them, their child, or their family.

Many times their first question on the telephone is "How much are Lessons", or "When are your classes".

The reason they ask these types of questions is that they really don't know what else to ask. A more "important" question might be "Do you teach children to be better students?" or "How exactly do you teach focus skills to your students?", or "How do you handle children with ADD/ADHD?", or "Do you do criminal background checks on all your staff and instructors?" or the like.

These questions are FAR more "important" to a parent, or student looking for lessons, but the average prospective student simply doesn't know that you are any different than the guy down the street, so it's your responsibility to educate them.

So the best strategy for handling typical questions like "How much are lessons", is to use the art of telephone Aikido. I'm sure you're aware of some of the philosophy of Aikido. As the stiff branch of the Oak tree breaks under the weight of the heavy snow, the limber bow of the Willow simply bends and deposits the snow on the ground below. This "redirection" of energy is what's needed when handling the initial question from a prospective new student.

We redirect this initial question by asking a question of our own, the prospective new student asks "How much are your lessons", you reply "I'd love to help you with that.....are these lessons for yourself, or for a child?"

Control the Call With Questions

Now you are firmly in the driver's seat of the conversation, and you should control the call with questions. Keep in mind, that this is a new person that you have the opportunity to help. This is a life you have the chance to change for the better, if (and ONLY if) you can get them to truly understand that value of training in your program.

Now that you have control of the call, you simply gather all the information you need to move to the next stage. You'll want to collect complete contact information from them including email address, mobile number (for text messaging) etc, and then begin to understand their needs.

It's All About THEM....Not You

During the phone interview, you need to find out why it is that they are interested in lessons. What problem are they trying to solve. What benefit do they really want. What DON'T they want?

Frequently, when we start working 1 on 1 with a new Peak Performer or Inner Circle Coaching member, we find that they have built an "egocentric" phone script. Where they describe to the student all about how great their style is, how many tournaments they've won, how great their grandmaster is and so on.

It's far more important to learn about THEM, rather than detail your resume. You have to first understand what THEY want, then communicate to them how your school can give them that.

It's a useful paradigm to think of yourself like a physician. A physician would first "diagnose" the patient, before recommending a treatment. Well, you and your program should be no different. Here is your opportunity to diagnose, to learn about them and find out how you can help.

We all know how valuable martial arts training in a professional school is.....but THEY don't! You can never assume that "they" know what you know. You have to take responsibility for educating them, so that they "understand" that value of what you have to offer. Their perception is the ONLY thing that counts.

You may be the best teacher on the planet, you may teach (what you believe to be) the "best" style in the face of the Earth, but if you don't persuade THEM that what you have to offer is of tremendous value to THEM, or solves THEIR problem, nothing else matters.

Call for Action

The final stage of your call should conclude with the new prospective student committing to attending some type of "Introductory" program. You must make some "irresistible offer" that virtually anyone mildly interested in what you do would take advantage of.

Think about late night infomercials. When a prospective customer views the "Sham Wow" commercial, they begin to have an internal conversation. They may be thinking, "Wow, this is cool, I

might have a need for that?. Once that person has an interest, now they need an irresistible "reason" to take action RIGHT NOW.

The same goes for your new prospective student. Now if your chance to encourage them to take action, to come in and "see for themselves" what you can do for them. So anything you can do to make that offer "irresistible" is useful. For example, include a free DVD, or a Free T-Shirt, Uniform or other bonuses. Perhaps you can even offer them a special discount if they bring a friend to train with.

Additionally, It's VERY important to make a personal connection with this new prospective student and for them to be earnestly looking forward to meeting you. Virtually no offer will persuade someone to come into your school if they "don't" want to meet you, and conversely, if a prospective student REALLY wants to meet you, they'll make sure they actually show up for their appointment, ignoring any potential distractions.