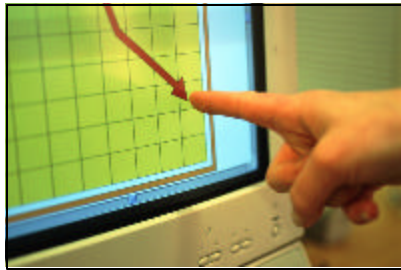


# Sales Call Reluctance: Who's Got It? Who Spreads It?

by George W. Dudley



**D**o your salespeople dread making sales calls? Hesitate to follow-up leads? According to veteran researchers George W. Dudley & Shannon L. Goodson, your own sales managers could be infecting your best salespeople with sales call reluctance.

Sales call reluctance spreads rapidly through sales organizations. How? By incidental or prolonged exposure to individuals or sales support materials with ready access to the sales force. Here is a partial list of organizational call reluctance “carriers” we have observed unintentionally contaminating attitudes about prospecting.

## Call Reluctance “Carriers”

- Performance coaches, motivational speakers
- Human resource practitioners (influence sales selection policies)
- Psychologists
- Recruiters (influences “applicant pool”)
- Sales trainers and commercial sales training packages
- Peers & colleagues (coping models)
- Sales managers (role models)
- Senior sales executives (sales philosophy)

## Mind Games. Word Games.

In many organizations, bronze “mission statements” gallantly proclaim unwavering dedication to high-minded principles. Yet their salespeople are expected to boogie on without missing a beat during chaotic restructurings, spastic reorganizations, mergers, acquisitions, buy-outs and sell-outs.

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When senior management holds conflicted attitudes about the primacy of selling, the message trickles down throughout the organization, including the sales staff. Some companies try to cope by adopting a “no-sales sales force,” where salespeople are indoctrinated to represent themselves to prospective buyers as “advisors” or “consultants.” Never, ever, on peril of their soul, are they to refer to themselves as “salespeople.” That’s an obscenity. By month’s end, though, their salespeople are held accountable for new business sold, not advice given or market goodwill, or friends acquired. These mixed messages result in a predictable outbreak of sales role conflict and confusion, which has effectively reduced many of today’s best equipped salespeople to little more than highly trained professional visitors.

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### **Sales Call Reluctance: Organizational “Signatures”**

*How do you really feel about selling? Has call reluctance slipped into the ranks of your senior management staff? Here’s a few warning signs to look for in your organization.*

| <b>Call Reluctance Type</b> | <b>Behavioral Signature</b>   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Over-Preparation            | To many meetings; salespeople weighted down with unnecessary administrative requirements; administrative compliance seen as more important than new business. |
| Oppositional Reflex         | Management by temper tantrum; internal politics; power struggles; sycophants for advisors; personal survival elevated over team mindedness.                   |

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**About the Author:** George W. Dudley is co-author of the best selling book *The Psychology of Sales Call Reluctance: Earning What You’re Worth in Sales*. He has conducted numerous studies, both nationally and internationally on the nature and impact of sales call reluctance. He is Board Chairman of Behavioral Sciences Research Press (BSRP), a global organization with headquarters in Dallas, Texas. The firm engages in international scientific research and specializes in the psychological assessment of sales and sales management personnel. BSRP’s publication and training divisions produce psychological applications that are used by Fortune 100 firms. Research prepared by BSRP is regularly presented at academic gatherings, including Southwestern Psychological Association and European Congress of Cognitive Behavioral Psychology, among others. He has been an invited speaker at diverse organizations including the Million Dollar Roundtable and Sydney, Australia’s AM Breakfast. His work has been featured in publications ranging from the Financial Times of London to the Society for Industrial & Organizational Psychologists.

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