**Big Brother Better Be Watching**

****I know. I know. 1984 has come and gone.

But sometimes you need to act like Big Brother when it comes to your salespeople and their customers.

Here’s how to do that the right way: I went to a seminar when I was a new sales manager. The speaker said that sales managers should call every customer once a quarter and ask them one question:

What can we do to provide you with better service?

So, I started doing it. And I learned a lot about my sales team and their professionalism — or lack thereof, in certain instances. This habit also kept me connected to the customer when there was salesperson turnover.

It also gave me plenty of sales meeting fodder.

The longer you keep up the habit, the better the answers you will get because your prospects and customers know you are going to be calling.

Ask, *“What could we do to provide you with better service?”* And truly listen to the response. Your customers will tell you things that will help you coach your team better and give you insights into how your people are really doing in the field.

I have passed this idea along to many sales managers over the years. One of them was Mike Varney. Mike called a customer and asked the question. He received the following reply.

“In order to provide me better service, you would have to get a salesperson from your company to call on me,” said the customer.

It turns out the salesperson wasn’t making the calls he’d reported. It might be nice to know a little thing like that, too.

Every salesperson that is doing his or her job will be glad you are calling their customers. It shows that someone else at your company cares. And what sales pro wouldn’t want to get helpful advice on how to keep the customer happy?

Sure, you could spend two weeks creating a survey and sending an e-mail to every customer hoping to get a 15 percent response rate. You will get more usable information by asking that one question in real time to another human being.

Trust me on this one, Big Brother.

(Permission granted to reprint this article with attribution to the author.)