Cold-Calling Trick: 16 Ways to Start a Conversation

The most effective way to open a conversation is to connect your call to one of these "trigger events." Here's how.
By Geoffrey James | Sep 11, 2012

The purpose of a cold call is to have a conversation to determine whether a potential customer has the following two things:

- a need your offering can satisfy, and
- the money to purchase it.

That conversation can happen, though, only if you get through the customer's natural reluctance to speak with a stranger.

The easiest way to get through that reluctance is to have a reason you're calling, other than just the fact that you have something to sell.

For example, suppose you're selling an inventory control system. Here are two possible ways to begin the conversation:

- "I'm calling because I'm selling a great inventory control system that can save you money."
- "I'm calling because I understand that you just announced a new product line--and since that usually increases inventory costs, you may be looking to for a way to reduce those costs."

The second example is more likely to result in a conversation because it relates what you're selling to what's called a **trigger event**, a change in the way that a potential customer operates its business.

The following trigger events are all excellent conversation starters:

1. The company has opened a new factory or facility.

2. It is moving an existing facility to a new location.

3. It has hired a new executive.

4. It has lost an existing executive.

5. It has announced a layoff.

6. It has announced an expansion.

7. It has acquired a new major customer.

8. It has lost a major customer.

9. It has launched a new product line.

10. It has retired an existing product line.

11. It has updated a major existing product.

12. It is acquiring another company.

13. It is being acquired by another company.

14. It has announced a restructuring.

15. It has announced a new round of financing.

16. It has announced a change in ownership.

The trick to using trigger events is creating a reasonable link between the event and what you're selling. The more logical the link, the more likely that bringing up the trigger will result in a conversation.

Where do you find these trigger events? The cheapest way is to check the press releases on the website of the company that you're calling. An easier way, however, is to expand your CRM system to include a service, like SalesLoft.com or InsideView.com, that trolls the Web and displays relevant news stories and announcements on potential or current customers.

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