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[Home](#) > [Marketing](#) > [Getting Your Foot in the Door: 7 Steps to Successful Cold-calling](#)
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Getting Your Foot in the Door: 7 Steps to Successful Cold-calling

by Jeff Mowatt

Cold Calling Success: Cold calling doesn't have to be a demoralizing knuckle-biting activity. If you use these seven steps, it can become a motivating, profit-producing activity.



"The problem with my salespeople is they're not cold calling enough!" That's the concern I hear most often from sales managers and business owners when I speak at conventions on how to boost sales. Yet when I examine their cold calling strategies, I generally find they're ill conceived.

Decision-makers in most organizations soon grow weary of the large number

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of salespeople phoning them. So if you're not well trained when you cold call, I guarantee that you'll get slapped with a lot of rejection.

On the other hand, when you're professionally trained, cold calling is easy and tremendously profitable. Here are 7 steps to boost your cold calling success.

1. Create a targeted telephone list

Have the list of people you're going to contact within easy access so that you can make several calls without stopping. You can create your list through trade association directories, chambers of commerce and even your local library. You can also purchase lists from private companies listed under "mailing lists" in the yellow pages. The best list is the referrals you obtain from current customers.

It's also a good idea to have a contact management system to keep track of your calls and when you'll follow-up.

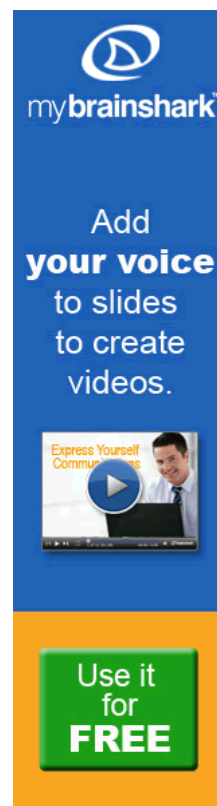
2. Set a goal and script your call.

Be clear about what the goal is for your call; be it to set up a meeting, send literature, or whatever. Then write a script to achieve that goal. That's not to suggest that you'll recite the entire conversation, just the first few key statements. Though this may seem artificial, most successful salespeople use a script to ensure that they consistently have a strong impact. On the telephone you don't have time to make mistakes. Every word counts, so you must be prepared.

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**3. Locate the decision-maker.**

In some cases, the decision-maker is not necessarily the person who does the buying. The organization may have a separate purchasing department for that purpose. So ask the switchboard operator or the receptionist to speak with, "The person who makes the decision



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regarding..."

When attempting to contact the key person, avoid leaving voice mail messages the first two times you call. Unfortunately, it's relatively rare that people who have buying authority return unsolicited sales calls. If, after the third attempt, you still can't reach them, then leave a voice mail message. But make sure you've scripted a powerful message that has a compelling reason for them to return your call. That's another reason why it's important to prepare a script in advance.

Do not ask a stranger on the telephone, "How are you, today?"

4. Introduce yourself and get to the point

Do not ask a stranger on the telephone, "How are you, today?" They realize that you don't know them and you really don't care how they are. So they think you're wasting their time. Don't fake familiarity.

Here's how your conversation with the decision maker might begin: "Hello, Mary. We haven't met yet. My name is Jeff Mowatt, with JC Mowatt Seminars. I wonder if you might help me. The reason I'm calling is that I understand that you're the person who's in charge of staff training. Is that true or has someone been spreading a rumor?"

5. Give a benefit statement.

This is a clear, simple statement that indicates what the benefit might be of them doing business with you. For example, "The reason I'm calling is to find out if we might be able to enhance your staff's ability to gain and keep customers."

At this point you've said enough. It's time for the other person to get some control. So, follow that benefit statement with, "Do you have a moment to talk?" If they do, then go on to the next step. If they don't, then ask when would be a good time to call them back and then follow-up accordingly.

6. Give a brief specific case history.

Here's how this might sound, "I want to make sure our businesses could be a match, so I'll give you an example of what we do, and you can tell me whether there might be a fit. Fair enough? We did a front line training seminar for the ABC Company and followed that up with a self study training system. The result was they increased customer retention by thirty percent. That created approximately \$300,000 in additional revenues and reduced the amount they spent on training by over 60%."

The more specific you can be in your case history, the more compelling your proposal will be. So, give actual numbers and percentages if possible.

Then ask them if they fall into the category that makes this benefit possible for them. So you might say, "In order for us to be able to help you, you need to have a staff of at least 5 full or part time people who interact regularly with customers. Does that apply to you?" If they qualify, then go to the next step.

7. Accomplish your goal.

If your goal is to set up a meeting, suggest to the person, "Perhaps we can sit down together and... (give them a general idea of what you'll do in the meeting)."

Keep in mind that some prospects are so leery of telephone solicitors, that they have to be completely sold on the phone before they'll agree to see you in-person. So you need to know how to probe, summarize, make an emotional connection, ask for the order, and deal with objections – all the aspects of selling- before you start cold calling.

Training is the Key

Cold calling doesn't have to be a demoralizing knuckle-biting activity. It can, in fact, be motivating and extremely profitable - providing you have the right training.

Jeff Mowatt is a corporate trainer and international speaker. His focus is, "The Art of Client Service: Influence with Ease" –subtle, ethical ways to enhance service and boost revenues – without working harder. For tips, self-study kits, and information about book Jeff, visit www.jeffmowatt.com or call 1-800-jmowatt (566-9288).

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