

Cold Calling Is Dead

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Cold Calling Tips

Part 1: Cold Calling Is Still an Effective Sales Tactic if Done Right

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The obituary for cold calling is premature. While in the perfect world, your phone would be ringing off the hook all day with clients offering you business, the reality is that if you want business, you need to go after it, and cold calling is an effective sales tactic if it's done properly.

If thought of cold calling makes your stomach drop to your toes these tips won't eliminate your fear, but they will help you make cold calling a more successful experience.



Cold Calling

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1) Focus on the goal.

Beginners tend to think that cold calling is about making the sale. It's not. It's about getting the chance to make the sale. Specifically, the purpose of a cold call is to set an appointment to make the pitch.

2) Research your markets and prospects.

You need to target your cold calling to the right audience. Use market research to focus on your target market. (See [How to Find and Sell to Your Target Market](#).) Then find out as much as you possibly can about the company or individual you're going to call in advance. This gives you the huge advantage of being able to talk about their business and their needs when you call them.

3) Prepare an opening statement for your call.

This lets you organize your thoughts before calling, and helps you avoid common mistakes in the opening that would give the person you're calling the chance to terminate the conversation. For instance, you should never ask, "Is this a good time to talk?" or "How are you today?" Don't read your opening statement into the phone, but use it as a framework to get the cold calling conversation off to a good start.

4) What should be in the opening statement?

This organizational scheme for cold calling (from [AllBusiness.com](#)) works well: "Include a greeting and an introduction, a reference point (something about the prospect), the benefits of your product or service, and a transition to a question or dialogue. For example, 'Good afternoon, Ms. Marshall. This is Ken Brown with Green Works. I read in the local paper that you recently broke ground for a new office complex. We specialize in commercial landscape services that allow you to reduce in-house maintenance costs and comply with the city's new environmental regulations. I'd like to ask a few questions to determine whether one of our programs might meet your needs.'"

5) Prepare a script for the rest of your call.

Lay out the benefits of your product or service and the reasons your prospect should buy. Write out possible objections and your answer to them. Without a cold calling script, it's too easy to leave something out or meander. Once again, it's not that you'll be reading your script word for word when you call, but that you've prepared the framework of the cold call in advance.

6) Ask for an appointment at a specific time.

Say, "Would Wednesday at 11 a.m. be a good time to meet?" instead of saying, "Can I meet with you to discuss this next week?"

7) Remember that gatekeepers are your allies not your foes.

Be pleasant to whoever picks up the phone or is guarding the inner sanctum when cold calling. Develop strategies to get the gatekeeper on your side. Sometimes asking, "I wonder if you could help me?" will help you get the information you need, such as the name of the right person to talk to or when the best time to contact the prospect is. Learning the names of gatekeepers and being friendly when cold calling helps, too.

8) Smooth the way for your call by sending prospects a small, unique promotional item.

This helps break the ice and makes your business stand out from the crowd. Pat Cavanaugh, sales guru of [Inc.com](#), says, "It's amazing. A \$2.15 crazy little item we've sent out has helped us get Fortune 500 accounts. When we call, they say, 'Oh yeah....you were the one that sent me that...'"

9) Do your cold calling early in the morning, if possible.

That's the best time to reach the decision maker directly, and for most people, the time that they're most energized.

10) Be persistent.

"Eighty percent of new sales are made after the fifth contact, yet the majority of sales people give up after the second call" ([AllBusiness.com](#)).

And above all, practice, practice, practice. While cold calling may never be much fun for you, you can get better at it, and the more you practice, the more effective a sales tactic it will be. So get your script and your call list together and reach for the phone. The people who want to do business with you are out there - but you have to let them know about you first.

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