



Cold Calling Tips for Successful Cold Calls

Cold Calling is STILL Useful IF You Do It Right.

Are you a professional who must make money from selling activities? If so, you're likely facing the prospect of making a COLD CALL. While cold calling is akin to a root canal for many salespeople, it doesn't have to be that way.

FEAR of COLD CALLING:

Why are salespeople afraid to make cold calls? The number one reason is simple: they are afraid they'll be rejected. It is odd, but you get told "no" enough times, and sometimes rudely, you tend to fear picking up the phone to make another cold call.

The real problem with fear and cold calling is the lack of sales process when applied to a cold call. If you use a system for cold calls, your cold call effectiveness will increase, because fear is minimized and success is maximized.

The Cold to Gold System for Cold Calling:

While I can't spill all the beans, I can give you many of the keys to successful cold calling, done right.

First, you must have the right perspective. Too many salespeople are caught up in THEIR product, THEIR company, and THEIR chatter... rather than being focused on the PROSPECT's COMPANY, PRODUCTS, and VERNACULAR. If you call the prospect, therefore, you ought to know something about them.

Start with research about your prospect to improve cold calls.

1. Do online research for cold call effectiveness. Dig into their annual report (if public, these are always posted online). Dig up more information through press releases and product descriptions.

2. Do customer research for cold call maximization. While most sales coaches worth their salt will recommend you research your prospect online (duh), few coaches recommend you call your PROSPECT's customer to interview them about how they like using that company's products. You can simply state "I'm seeking to simply ask for a recommendation as to how effective their solution has been." Once the customer of your prospect starts sharing information, ask them ONE KEY QUESTION: "If there was any way they could be better, what suggestions would you make?"

The cold call magic bullet? Then listen, and take notes. In their response lies the GOLD for you to approach your prospect in your cold call! If you do this again for three or four of their customers, you'll start to get a VERY CLEAR picture of how THEY can improve. Imagine, rather than simply calling a prospect and GUESSING at what their needs might be... if you instead called them KNOWING what several of their CUSTOMERS who already buy from them would like to get from them.

The magic bullet: although there isn't a clear cold calling magic bullet, per se, with each prospect, you sure get a lot closer to knowing hot points and speaking intelligently on your cold calls as a partner or consultant by taking this approach. If you can, call a customer (or a few customers) and ask how they like using their product. With this information you learn your cold call is no longer cold. Actually, your cold call turned into a warm call - because you're now informed with valuable

information the prospect needs!

3. Research INSIDE the prospect's own company for complete effectiveness.

Obviously, you want to be referred to the prospect - or the decision maker for your solution. The best way to get that referral is from INSIDE the prospect's company. Think about it, who do you trust the most? In the personal world, generally speaking, we trust our family the most. Well, in the corporate world, we trust our business associates at our company the most. So talk to people who work there and get their insights into the customer challenges you've discovered. That way, when you talk to the decision maker, you can say "Jane from HR referred me to you." Or whatever name and department is appropriate. It's a great way to start your cold call conversation, because immediately you're warm - not cold!

4. Cold call outside "normal" hours. When you pick up the phone to make a cold call, try to call your prospect either first thing in the morning, at lunch, or at the end of the day. Why? Well, the odds of getting screened by their administrator go down dramatically when you cold call before 8:00 a.m., between Noon and 1:00 PM, and after 5:00pm - especially after 6:00pm. When you make cold calls during this time frame, do NOT leave voicemail. You can always leave voicemails during other times. But the point is to reach your primary contact, not mess around with their administrator and get screened.

5. Treat the administrator like the prospect when calling. If you cannot avoid cold calling off-times or simply must cold call through their administrator, then treat the administrator as if they WERE the contact you're reaching.

What happens is the administrator will start to try to DIRECT you. What you say when they start going in that direction is critical. Use the phrase: "How does their schedule look. I have Monday two weeks from now available." first. If you get push back, use: I'm seeking to help them directly. How can you help me?" This works wonders for me. People tend to want to help IF you ask how can you help me in your cold call. You still may get screened, but if you shared some of the information (not all) you wish you share with the target executive, then you're more likely to get through. But all of this is more work. Thus, the reason I recommend cold calling outside typical times.

6. Plan your cold calls. When you cold call, you ought to always have a plan for the call. What is step one? Step two? Step three? I recommend you begin with the end in mind. Unless you're selling girl scout cookies, you probably won't be selling your solution on the first call. Usually, you must quickly grab their attention. You typically have about 10 seconds before they start treating you like a salesperson (in other words, pushing you off, pulling away). Why?

The answer is that most salespeople do stupid things while cold calling. This makes the job harder for you. Because the last phone call they picked up where they didn't recognize the answer might have burned them. Therefore, your cold call must be better, quicker, and smarter than the others.

An example of typical sales cold calls is as follows:

"Hi Mary, this is John from ACME Solutions. How are you today?...(reply)... Well, the reason I'm calling is my company offers solutions for..."

And, unfortunately, the typical sales cold call is immediately triggering the prospect's alert button for "BRAINLESS SALESPERSON ALERT!" Seriously. First of all, do you want to sound like every other salesperson? No. Second, do you know enough about them to talk about you, your company, or your product? No again! Right?

7. Better cold call scripting. So, don't talk about YOURSELF when you start your cold call. Every other salesperson cold calls that way. Instead, talk about THEM. If you've learned anything from Dale Carnegie, you'll recall the phrase "You get more with honey than vinegar." Since they don't know you, start with praise for their company or an award they might have won. People like to hear they're doing a good job.

Next, mention you spoke with a few of their customers, and want to share some unique insights and possible problems you can help them overcome. (Of course, make sure to choose problems and insights related to your solution, if possible). They will, at this point, ask "Who is this?" Tell them your name. They will likely say "What company are you with?" And then you tell them. See the difference? Most salespeople start off saying "Hi, Mary, this is John from ACME..." right there the

"salesperson" light goes ON and destroys the cold call! If, instead, try a script like this:

"Hi, Mary, I heard you won an award for technology innovation last month from the Churchhill Club- congratulations! I was speaking with Joan over in your IT department, who confirmed that Sageway, one of your clients, is satisfied with your company; however, your Matrix Systems aren't really meeting Jack Benny's needs over at Sageway... (if they haven't interrupted you asking who this is yet, continue with this) "so, I want to help you meet Jack's (stated need) and collaborate on a solution with you."

At this point, they are SURE to ask "who is this?" If they don't, they weren't listening. The whole point of the cold call is to get THEM to interrupt you (because interrupting is rude and you already interrupted them by calling them, so you need to level the cold call playing field to equality). When they do interrupt you, they will likely ask "Who is this?" You reply "John Jacobson (your name here, of course)." then continue with the OBJECTIVE of the CALL: a MEETING.

8. The cold call close. "I am looking at my calendar, and looking out to next Thursday at 1:00 PM I could work in 30 minutes to meet with you. I look forward to discussing how we can help design more improvements for Sageway together." If they haven't confirmed or interrupted again, simply ask: "Is that time clear on your calendar?" They will either confirm with you or ask about the purpose of the meeting. Again, you restate the problem you heard about, and you discuss how you like working together to solve clients like that. Keep in mind, they need to own your solution as much as you do, and what gets "invented here" gets "recommended here" is the mindset of the prospect.

You notice the difference? I have not recommended you mention your product. Nor have I mentioned the specific solution. Frankly, you don't know for sure if you have one. You can't know that until you meet together. The objective IS the meeting. And, preferably, a well-qualified meeting. If they don't really believe they have that need you mentioned, or don't believe there is a problem, trust me, they WILL let you know. Then, you better have a cold call back up plan!

9. Alternative situations. Ask any general if their missions go to plan and most will tell you that they often don't. In case plan A doesn't work, well, you better have a backup plan. Perhaps a second problem or additional situation is appropriate? Maybe that is a time you could mention that you are helping many companies with typical problems relating to (need 1, need 2, need 3) and impact results by over (whatever results you can honestly quantify for them). Emotional words, like "faster, quickly, less time, removed x hours in the process, lowered costs by 34.5%" and then a name drop of two or three companies they would recognize is useful at this point. Then they can identify with the types of solutions you might offer them, and select if this is a good time to meet.

Let them know your expertise (your company trained you to be an expert, didn't they?) gives you unique qualifications to roll up your sleeves alongside someone like them.

The whole purpose of the meeting is to discuss if there is a alignment between your organizations for a possible win-win and then discuss the solution once you've better defined the need requirement together. We're not being deceptive. We're being INNOVATIVE. If you take this approach, your cold calls will progress considerably better than peer cold calls. I use this approach myself, and although it sometimes takes a couple of minutes longer to prepare for my calls, as a result my calls are more productive.

Not only that, but once you start truly solving problems for clients this way, you start to put on your problem-solving cap more than your selling cap. And, a problem-solver is someone a client will treat as a confidante: a welcome friend. The salesperson, they may like, but they often will toss out for the next lowest bidder. Who would you rather be?

I prefer being the friend, the problem-solver. And the only way to do that is find REAL problems, dig deeper to expand the problem to find out the total cost of that issue, and then present a solution that could meet their need.

10. Better qualified meetings and more wins. It is possible to follow-up a cold call, in this instance, with an understanding of the problem along with your possible solution. You can then send that preliminary proposal as a "draft solution" to create

talking points for your meeting.

Do you think your meeting will go better when you do that? My experience is a considerably more qualified meeting, higher return on prospecting time, and higher closed deals. Initially, you'll have fewer deals in the pipeline, because you'll input less garbage deals. But as your qualification and true consulting cold calling process goes up, so will your call success.