



# EXPERT ARTICLE

## Gain Customers by Cold Calling

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**Let us be honest no-one enjoys cold calling. If they say they do then they are either delusional or lying to you. Gaining customers from cold calling is one of the hardest jobs for any sales person, but if you can be successful at it, it's a great way to grow your business.**

### **Preparation is Key**

People put off things they don't like doing. I have seen sales people achieve 2 calls an hour because they want to prepare well for each call. The preparation normally includes a cigarette, coffee and toilet break. This is the same with cold calling, and it ends up never being done.

You cannot cold call 8 hours a day. You get tired and it can be very hard work. You need to be sharp, so set aside a time each day to call, say from 9 til 11. 3 days per week. Not Monday mornings, but pm can work.

If you want to get to the head guy, call after hours. Who picks up the phone after 6? Normally the key people in a business. It shows your dedication and theirs.

Don't be a lone crusader. Call alongside somebody else. It can help motivate, makes it easier, competitive and discuss problems such as objections etc.

Take a leaf out of the Japanese book of cold calling, stand up when making the calls, you are more focused and you have more oxygen going to the brain, which means you are sharper. Dress in a business like manner. Smile on the phone, people can hear your smile!

### **Set yourself realistic goals.**

List the companies you wish to call the night before, do your research upfront and then switch off your PC and just call. No email, no typing into your CRM package. After your hour of calling and target numbers achieved then switch back on your PC update your CRM, do follow-up emails outside of your designated call period.

It is also key to have in mind what you are trying to achieve on the call.

Getting a sale with the first call is unrealistic. Getting an appointment may not be, but you will need to ask for one, otherwise it will never happen. So what can you achieve on the first call?

## **Understand your Customer**

Or to quote Stephan Covey, “seek first to understand then be understood.”

Remember to sell to your customer you must understand them and their business to understand how your product can add value to their business. So ask open ended questions and build a rapport with the person you are talking to. People buy from people they know and trust. Make them feel they know you, you know them and that they can trust you. Keep a note of key points both personal and business to build your understanding of the business and potential business partner.

## **Be Honest & Polite!**

“I would like to talk to you about how your business does.....”

“Do you have 2 minutes to discuss this now? “ Most people will not deny you two minutes. Most will counter-what about? Now you need to give your spiel.

If they do not have time ask if a particular time suits them. “May I call you at 2pm this afternoon?”

## **Get past the gatekeeper**

Do you see the secretary as an enemy? If you do then they will be. They have a job to do just like you, and that is to keep people like you away from the person you want to speak to. The secretary normally knows more about what is going on in a company, who is where and when in any company than most managers. Win them as a friend and you have a door and a window into the company.

Ask them for their help, quite often they will adopt you and help you, if you show you respect their position of power within the company. Learn their name and something about them without sounding like you are asking for a date.

You should not do the following “Can I speak to X?” Reply “I’m sorry he is in an appointment can I help?” “No I will phone back later”.

Always get their name, it is so much warmer when you ask them a question. If they say, “Sorry she is in a meeting, can I help at all?” reply, “Yes please Samantha”. Plus when you call back and you get them on the phone again, “Hi Samantha” gives you a much better intro.

## **How to start the call with the main person**

Rather than ask for the head person straight away gather some info first. Ask the secretary who is responsible for marketing, operations or any relevant sector and talk to them first, try to get first and last names. Learn as much as you can. If you call the main person and can say I spoke with X in your organisation and they recommended that I talk to about X.

If you do not start the call well you will never get the business, the start dictates the end, and is the most important part of the call. Start by introducing yourself and your business, I tend to be informal and use my first name only but I normally call my customers by their surname, until they offer otherwise. Remember slow down they need to understand what you are saying.

The next thing you do is to give them the reason for your call. Make it as important as possible, not “I found you on the internet” but “Bob from Groovy suggested I contact you”. The better the reason for the call, the more chance you have of success! However do not invent anything. Lies can kill a deal.

State the purpose of your call. “I would like to win your business as a client, because I know we can help you make more money! To do this I need ten minutes of your time. Do you have ten minutes now?” Or if you want an appointment: “when can I come and see you”.

Then start them talking use SPIN techniques to understand their business. If your business model is to sell on the phone go for it. If you really want an appointment then ask for one.

So to summarise the start of the call:-

- Introduce yourself
- Reason for call.
- Give them an overall benefit statement
- Ask permission to proceed

Gain customers by cold calling II

**You have your foot in the door, but now you must close the deal.**

**Ask questions to find the ‘need’ - use the SPIN technique;**

What **Situation** are they in?

What **Problems** is this causing them?

What **Implications** does this have for them?

What **Need** does this result in?

How does your product fit the above analysis?

If you have a potential customer ask them questions that answer the above points and guide them to suggest a solution. They should end up almost suggesting your product as the solution if you listen to them, respond to their input and if your product really is what is needed as a solution. If it is not did you listen to the customer, ask the right questions and establish a need that your product can fulfil? If not go back to go, do not collect \$200 and start again.

You may think you know what their problems are, in which case you will ask closed questions, such as “do you do this?”, “have you got this?”, “does your machine have this problem?”

These all get a yes/no answer, which gives you no information. So ask open questions which will give you information about what they need and why. There are 7 words that start an open ended question. How, why, what, which, who, when, where; use them all the time.

Summarise their needs and wants, i.e play back what they have said to make sure you have understood correctly and to re-emphasise the points in their head. Then give them what they need. i.e. This is how we can help you

address the above problems removing the implication and fulfilling the need.

Then close them.....

### **The close**

many people have trouble closing. Why because they are scared of getting down to business. They fear rejection, so often view no decision as better than a negative. Well I tend to disagree. To get what you want on the call you have to ask for it. The best close I have ever come across is the 'alternative' win-win. You offer them two realistic options, it works as it means that they have to make a choice, and it allows them to make the decision, but the decision you want.

"I suggest we meet in order to find out your exact requirements. Which would suit, next Thursday at 3pm or I could do Wednesday at 1?" If you are feeling good and they say no to both of these, see if you can get them to move another appointment to fit you in. This is starting to build commitment on their part.

"Tuesday at 9, sorry I am busy all day Tuesday, I could do Wednesday at 11 if that works for you?" If they then say Tuesday at 9 is the only time, then emphasise that you need to rearrange something else, but that yes you will make the meeting.

Another close I like is the 'assumed' when I am certain they want to buy, however if you are near rather than email or post go and see them with an order form. Meet them and build a face to face relationship. This can get you more business and repeat business.

Remember sending a leaflet, brochure or email is often a fob-off and you will never hear from them again, so if they ask for a leaflet, maybe say, I will bring you our brochure around, when do you have five minutes so I can drop it off!" If you are doing telephone sales think about using a web-based catalogue over a product like [www.gotomeeting.com](http://www.gotomeeting.com) so you can take them through the brochure online and explain what it does and capture more information by asking questions.

If you get one sale out of ten when cold calling, you have done well, so best of luck!

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