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Five Steps to More Effective Cold Calling

By Carl Harvey

Mention the words "cold calling" and you have uncovered the most dreaded two words in the selling lexicon. Cold calling involves dealing with constant rejection, rude retorts and the click of phones in our ear. Most of what we hear are no's and negatives, and few people we call are glad to hear our voice. Given all this, the first question is not how do we cold call, but why bother in the first place? What is in it for us to go through this pain?

Perhaps the best answer to this question is captured in the maxim, "Feed a man fish and you feed him for a day; show a man how to fish and you feed him forever." If we master cold calling, we will have a job forever. Our success will no longer be dependent on the vagaries of our boss, territory or company policy. We will have developed a skill that will allow us to generate business no matter what we are selling or what the state of the economy. We won't be completely dependent on referrals or waiting for business to walk in the door. Equally important, we will have the unshakable confidence that we, not external factors, are the captains of our fate. These are powerful reasons to master this sales fundamental. Now let's consider how.

BEFORE THE COLD CALL:

The first two steps for effective cold calling occur before we even pick up the phone.

Step 1: Answer the question, "What's in it for my prospect to speak with me?"

Our prospects are busy. They also have problems and pains. This is why they will see some salespeople. To be one of those chosen few, we have to successfully tune into our prospect's frequency: WIIFM, or, What's In It for Me? We do that by finding the potential problem we can solve, the possible pain we can relieve or the potential gain we can deliver that is important to the person we have on the phone.

Step 2: Script our answer.

On a cold call, whether on the phone or in person, our attention has to be free and fully focused on active listening to be able to effectively hear and respond to our prospect. This is not possible, however, if we are simultaneously trying to craft and create responses to our prospect's remarks. The solution is to develop

scripts to deliver our message—the answer to our prospect’s WIIFM. Scripts free our focus and give us confidence by eliminating the uncertainty of what we are going to say. Our scripts need not be canned or artificial, any more than the rehearsed lines of movie or TV actors are canned or artificial. With a little practice, we can deliver our lines naturally and conversationally.

DURING THE COLD CALL:

Step 3: Grab our prospect’s attention.

Once in front of our prospect, whether on the phone or in person, we have to grab his or her attention — quickly. We have 20 to 30 seconds to do this before the press of the everyday recaptures our prospect. We gain this attention by tuning into the WIIFM frequency. It would sound something like this: "Good morning, John, I'm Carl Harvey with Success & Self-Esteem. We specialize in working with companies that are having problems with...or are concerned about...The purpose of my call is that if these are problems or concerns, I would like to set up a half-hour meeting to see if what we do may be a solution."

Step 4: Ask for the appointment.

Our purpose in cold calling is to get the appointment, not close the sale, sell our product or make friends or small talk. Everything we do on the phone should have this goal as the ultimate objective.

Step 5: Be prepared for our prospect’s questions, objections and dodges.

After our opening, unless our prospect hangs up, he will have to respond. You will find, as I have, that the possible responses our prospects will make, are, in fact, quite limited. This provides us with a powerful advantage: being prepared. Knowing beforehand that our prospects will respond in a limited number of ways to what we say allows us to position our response so as to optimize our opportunity and time.

Nothing can make cold calling fun. These five steps, however, can help make it more profitable. Give them a try.

Contact Us



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