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12 Handy Tips for Generating Leads through Cold-Calling

By Glenn Murray

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Cold calling can be a great way to generate quality leads. You get to speak to the gatekeepers and stakeholders, and you get a great insight into their requirements and influences.

But cold calling is an art-form. It can be daunting, it's always a lot of work, and you always need to make a good impression. So you need to do it right. Following are some tips which will help you do just that.

1) Record everything

Always write down all details of every phone call. Write down any names and titles you learn. Not just the name of the person you're trying to contact. The receptionist's name can be vital to remember as they're often gatekeepers. Write down when you called, and when you said you'd call back.

2) Use a database or spreadsheet to record everything

You'll never manage by hand, and Excel spreadsheets aren't user friendly in the long term. If you're prepared to invest in a real CRM (Customer Relationship Management) tool, that's a great idea. If not, you there is a cheaper alternative. I created my own database using Microsoft Access. Visit http://www.divinewrite.com/downloads/contacts_and_jobs.mdb to download a 208KB working copy for FREE. You'll need Microsoft Access 2000 to run it. I'm no database expert, so it's not a work of art. It'll certainly get you started though. (TIP: When using the database, press Ctrl + ; to enter today's date.)

3) Always call back when you said you would

Don't let them down. They may not even remember that you committed to calling back. But if they do, and you don't meet your commitment, you'll lose valuable credibility and respect. And wherever possible, work to their schedule. You're here to help them, not make things harder.

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TIP FOR COPYWRITERS: If you're an advertising copywriter or website copywriter, ask to speak to the Marketing Manager (or if the person who answers the phone says they don't have a marketing manager, ask for "the person who looks after your advertising & website" – all businesses have that person – it's generally one of the owners).

4) Always try to get on with the gatekeepers

Receptionists and personal assistants have great influence, and quite often do more of the real work and decision making than the person you're trying to contact! Make friends with them and you've got a foot in the door. (But don't waste their time or crawl - they get a lot of that!)

5) Keep it short 'n sweet

When you do get to speak with someone, keep it short 'n sweet unless they want to talk a lot. The purpose of the phone call is to get their attention, let them know you're there, get their name and contact details, and assess whether they have any requirement for your services. (**TIP FOR COPYWRITERS:** If you're an advertising copywriter or website copywriter, you might have called about brochure writing and then find out they need web writing.)

6) DON'T HARD SELL!!!

Don't pressure people or make it hard for them to get off the phone. Tell them what you do and that you'd like to send them an email with a link to your website with samples and testimonials (or with an attachment containing samples), then leave them to it.

7) Follow up with an email

If you have permission, always send a follow-up email - and do so immediately. Be specific in your subject line. (**TIP FOR COPYWRITERS:** If you're an advertising copywriter or website copywriter, use the words "advertising copywriting" or "website copywriting" in the subject. Most people don't get many emails with this in the subject line, so it'll be distinctive and probably won't be snuffed by their spam filter if they have one.) Address the email to them (e.g. "Hi Joe"), keep the email short 'n sweet. Include only the essential info, make it easy to read and conversational, and bold the important words or phrases as they'll probably only skim it. Include a link to your website, reference the day and date you talked on the phone (and thank them for that time), mention any names you learnt (e.g. receptionist's name, especially if the receptionist gave you an email address but you didn't actually get to speak to the decision maker), tell them that you'd like to follow up in a few weeks (assuming the conversation indicated that this would be a good idea).

8) Follow up with another call

If the lead looks promising, make sure you follow up. And when you do, always mention the day and date of the original call, as well as the fact that you sent an email. Give a quick summary of who you are and what you do, and say that you're just calling to make sure they got the email. Most of the time, you'll find the lead will talk to you about your services, if only to remind themselves of what you do!

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9) Don't expect to make too many calls

On a really good day, I've made 80 cold calls. Most days, though, you should be very pleased to average around 40. You'll spend a lot of time playing telephone tag.

10) Don't leave message

Unless you absolutely have to (or you've just about given up on the lead), don't leave messages. Most people have trouble returning phone calls from people they know and like; returning phone calls from someone who's trying to sell them something isn't high on their list of priorities.

11) Don't expect to qualify too many leads

Depending on your business, if you get one good lead a day, you're probably doing very well.

12) Don't expect immediate conversion

Unfortunately, most leads take a long time to come to fruition (up to 2 years). So you have to be prepared to be patient.

Good luck and happy calling!

* Glenn Murray is an advertising copywriter and heads copywriting studio Divine Write. He can be contacted on Sydney +612 4334 6222 or at

. Visit

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Field Implementation: Getting Referred Leads When Prospecting©

By Bill Truax

In our training workshops we often get questions about how to get "referred leads" so sales professional don't have to prospect anymore. It seems as if we will go to any length to avoid having to make cold calls.

In the 28 years that I have been training sales professionals, I have seen very few who actually know how to actively pursue referred leads and even fewer who actually do.

Now when we talk about getting referred leads when making cold calls, most sales people will think I am crazy.

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We I was cold calling in Houston with a salesman not long ago we got at least one referred lead from every cold call we made. Even I was amazed.

The way I do cold calls, they are simply brief calls made to meet the prospect, introduce myself and my company, get an appointment to comeback, and then get out. We are finding that many times the prospect will give you time right then. The idea behind the my prospecting system is that you should never simply drive past a good potential customer without stopping.

One of the things you find when you make cold calls on a regular basis is that you will have a lot of the prospects sit and talk with you. I am not sure why this is happening more now than before. It is either that people are getting more comfortable making the cold calls or the prospects are not being called enough and welcome the company. Either way, it is really fun to prospect in the field these days.

We were calling on people involved with quality assurance and I could see a plaque in everybody's office indicating membership in the local chapter of their association.

One of the first prospects we called on suggested that we call on one of his friends from the association in another company. We did and got an appointment two days later which included a complete tour of their testing facilities.

Acting on that premise, everyone that we called on for that week we simply asked, "Is there anyone else that you know in this area that we might call on?" They would give us a name and I would ask if it was all right to use their name. Everyone said it was OK.

My assignment was to help the salesman develop his skill at prospecting, making cold calls. But it turned into a week of going from one cold call to referred lead, after referred lead.

This may not work in every industry, but when you call on people who have a strong tie to a common organization or association, give it a try. The secret is simple you just have to do it.

Who knows, maybe you too will get referred leads when prospecting.

Sell Well and Often™

Bill Truax
Bill@BlitzCall.com

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Bill Truax is a Sales Management and Field Operations Consultant living in Cleveland, Oh. He conducts Sales Team Assessments, trains Managers and Leaders, and Field Sales Professionals both in the field and in workshops. He has written 3 books on Prospecting and Making Cold Calls and conducts a variety of skill based seminars, workshops, and train the trainer programs. Visit his website at



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