

Close more prospects in one week, than most do in 1 Year!

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By Talbert Williams

I Hate Cold Calls

Long before I started my business, I realized that I wasn't good at telephone sales and that I would need to generate leads in another way. I developed a sure-fire way to generate those leads, interest in me, and my business, through the use of telephone market research.

There are many benefits of doing market research including the ability to learn more about my target market's behaviors and opinions, honing messages and presentations based on real, first hand responses, as well as, to test out new messages or theories prior to wide release.

As a website developer and consultant, my large market is businesses and my main target group is small business owners. In order to contact these owners I would need access to their contact information.

For my target market, I found a regional business development directory to be very complete including names, addresses, phone numbers and website information. Some of the information was a little out of date but it was going to be far better than just cold calling to reach "The Owner or Manager" and get successfully past the front desk person etc. For other Business-to-Business companies I might suggest the local Chamber of Commerce or Business Association. Contact lists may be purchased or leased from outside sources, however, that is beyond the scope of this article.

For a client of mine, who is in the property care and landscaping industry, I was able to suggest hitting the phone book in the areas he wanted to generate business in and call every twentieth or thirtieth name in the book. The only criteria his respondent had to meet, was that they are a homeowner or property owner. In his case, my client is located in a small town and most respondents would be homeowners. If he were in a major city I would recommend that he be calling property management companies and target areas of the city with a high concentration of houses. Most cities still have their phone books broken down by community or borough.

Developing the Survey

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The first step in this process was to develop the survey. To do that you first need to determine the subject of the survey. This should also relate directly to the message you wish to communicate to the lead. For my company I wanted to find out one of two things: if the respondent had a website; what were the circumstances, experiences and opinions of having it, or if the respondent didn't have a website; the circumstances and reasons for not.

Tuning in the Respondent

As you can see, these questions relate to only one specific service – websites. This allows the respondent to easily understand what subject area you are talking about so that when you switch to providing your message they are already thinking about that subject. In my case, the respondent could easily tell that I was asking questions about websites, they probably figure that my business has

something to do with websites.

Keep Questions Open Ended

The survey questions should be as open ended as possible. This is not scientific, as it cannot be quantified in small sample sizes, but it is the best way to avoid leading the respondent to a perceived answer. They may feel that you are looking for a particular response. This can happen when you use a scaled response survey such as ratings of 1 to 5 or 1 to 7. In my own personal experience this type of survey is best left to academics. In most cases you are looking for opinions and experiences of an individual. Ask questions like, "Could you explain how you felt about the experience when you last purchased a car?"

Keep Things Brief

There should be no more than 10 to 15 questions on the survey. The fewer questions and the more open ended the better the dialogue with the respondent and the more valuable the information.

The Wrap Up

At the end of the survey when I ask if they are interested in more information about my company and services they already have an idea of what to expect and are more likely to be open to hear and receive my message because there is no surprise and I was not beating them over the head with message. I merely made them think about their website or lack thereof.

Script = Professionalism

Once you have developed your survey you should write a script. I know – I can hear your sighs now – you don't want to sound like a robot or just another telemarketer but the use of a script will ensure that you sound like a professional. The danger with a script is that it might not be conversational or may not consider the person on the other end of the phone. To avoid sounding robotic and like you are reading a script you should read it aloud to yourself. If you are unsure about how it sounds try it out on someone in your home or office. The worst thing you can do is to call up someone and start in with,

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"Uuuhhmmm, could I speak to – uuuhhmmm?"

Your script should include a brief introduction. In my case my introduction went like this, "Hello, Mr. Adams. My name is Jay Gilmore. The reason I am calling is that I am doing some market research for my business services company in your area and I wanted to get some feedback from fellow business owners, like yourself."

Note that I didn't mention the name of my company. This shows the respondent that I am a person calling to talk to another person – people like to talk to people and not businesses.

Removing the Common Objection

The next words that come off the script are very important, "I am not going to try to sell you anything, and I just want to ask a few questions to help in planning my business."

This has worked every single time to break through the, "I'm not going to listen to a sales pitch" instinct that so many business owners and consumers have developed over the years.

Ask for Their Time

Now that I have broken through their resistance I am able to request permission and their time to do the survey. Be respectful of the respondent's time by making sure that the survey may be completed in less than five minutes. Tell them how long it will take – and be honest. It is not very professional to lie or mislead people about the time you are asking them for.

Once the survey is complete you should conclude by thanking the respondent for assisting you with your research.

The Marketing Starts Now – Actually it Already Started

The marketing part is next. In closing you should briefly introduce your company and the service being marketed. An example would be, " Thank you Mr. Adams for all your help. I would like to let you know that my business, Joe's Flowers is a local flower shop that specializes in arrangements and designs from North American plants and flowers. Would you be interested in receiving more information about our services and our company?"

After answering questions in your survey about flowers and their buying habits they are probably ready to find more information about your company and its products or services. Get their mailing address and / or email address and any other information you require to send them the information you want.

What to Send

Sending the information about your business can make or break this relationship. You have already gotten willing permission to send information to the respondent – now you have to send them something that will lead them to choose to buy your product or service or refer a friend or colleague.

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The contents of the information package – be it electronic or print– should be a letter of introduction and thanks for the participation in the survey and some free and useful information that they will relate to regarding your product or services.

This information package is a first step to an ongoing relationship that will allow you to nurture goodwill and relationships with people who are actually interested in your business. The respondents will be expecting some form of marketing message but don't overdo it. Pushing too hard to close a sale at this stage will not work with this piece. This is not a direct mail promotion so don't treat it as such. That being, said don't hesitate to place importance and urgency on the message. Use benefit oriented copy to entice readers to take some form of action.

Follow-up Will Make the Sale – Well Some Anyway

As you bring the respondents closer to your business's products and or services by providing valuable information and examples of how it can better their lives many will choose to buy your products and services.

Give Up The Cold Call

You have now just read a great way to expose you business to new markets, new people, learn more about those markets and people, and get your message out – all with nothing more than a telephone

and a list of phone numbers. What is best is that you were able to get people to willingly accept your message without the anxiety and resistance of a sales cold call.

Talbert Williams offers debt consolidation, debt reduction, credit card debt referrals and advice. For more information, articles, news, tools and valuable resources on debt solutions, visit this site:

<http://www.1debtfreedom.com>

10 Important Things To Tell Your Prospects!

By Larry Dotson

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1. Tell your prospects that you offer free delivery. This may cost a little money, but, you will gain the extra customers to make up for it.
2. Tell your prospects that you offer a lower price. If you can't afford to offer a lower price you could always hold the occasional discount sale.

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3. Tell your prospects that your product achieves results faster. People are becoming more and more impatient and want results fast.
4. Tell your prospects you've been in business for a longer period of time. People think if you've been in business longer you have more credibility.
5. Tell your prospects that your product tastes, smells sounds, looks, or feels better. When you target the senses you're triggering human appeal.
6. Tell your prospects your product is compact or light. People may want to take the product on a trip or don't have much room where they live.
7. Tell your prospects that your product lasts longer. People don't like to spend more money purchasing replacement products all the time.
8. Tell your prospects that your product is easy to use. People don't want to buy a product that they have to read a 100 page instruction manual.
9. Tell your prospects that your product has better safety features. People want to feel safe when they use your products.
10. Tell your prospects that you stand behind all your products. People want to know that you back-up any claims you make about your product.

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