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From Cowardly to Courageous – How to Succeed at Cold Calling

By Jim McCormick

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There it is. That darn phone! And you have to pick it up and call someone you don't know. You need to make some cold calls.

The first thing to know is this – the longer you put off picking up the phone and making that first call, the heavier that phone gets. Give it enough time and you'll swear the phone weighs 500 pounds when you try to lift it.

I've been skydiving for years. In thousands of jumps, I've learned some valuable lessons that apply to lots of things ... including cold calling. So, let me share some insights with you I've reaped from all those skydives that will make you more successful at cold calling.

So, how do you get started? How do you overcome the understandable fear of cold calling? Here are a few simple steps.

Five Steps for Being More Successful Cold Calling

You Have to Believe in What You're Offering

See It From the Buyer's Perspective

Separate Yourself from the Inevitable Rejection

Accept the Fear – Then Move Through It

Keep Dialing

Step 1 – You Have to Believe in What You're Offering

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You have to believe in the product or service you're offering. You have to know you're selling something of value – something that will assist the person or organization you are calling.

If you are not sure of the benefits you're offering your prospect, you need to sit down and think about it. Ask yourself, "How will this person or their organization be better off if they buy what I am selling?" How will they sell more, save money, operate better, be happier, be more profitable – whatever the benefits are they'll enjoy.

This is vital! Do not bother going on to the next steps until you have this really clear in your mind. You will be wasting your time. You have to be absolutely convinced – deep down – of the value of your product or service.

Now, if you're stumped on this one, get some help. Ask some colleagues or friends for their thoughts

on the value you're offering. If you do all this and conclude there really is not much value in what you are offering ... move on! You will never be a success at selling something you don't believe in. And life is too short to spend your time doing it.

It's similar to skydiving. If you do not believe in yourself and your equipment, you have no business being in the plane – let alone in freefall. You owe it to yourself – and your prospects – to only sell something you in which you truly believe.

Step 2 – See It From the Buyer's Perspective

When I was getting certified to take people for their first skydive, I was first required to put on the student harness and ride on the front of an experienced instructor – just like my students do now. This was required because it is critical that I understand my student's perspective. Experiencing a jump from the student's perspective has definitely made me a better instructor.

It is the same for cold calling. You have to put yourself in the buyer's shoes. In your mind, trade places with your prospect. Ask yourself, "What would make me say, yes?" And also ask yourself, "What would make me say, no?" You have to appreciate the buyer's perspective to effectively sell to them.

It will help to ask people you've already sold to why they said, "yes." What made the difference to them? You'll gain valuable insights that will help you better understand you prospect's perspective – and make you more effective.

Step 3 – Separate Yourself from the Inevitable Rejection

When you're cold calling, you will experience rejection. It is unavoidable. Here is the important thing to keep in mind: It is not about you! Your prospect is not rejecting you. They are rejecting the product or service you're offering.

They may just not need it right now. Or they may be so overwhelmed with challenges, they just cannot focus on what you're offering and have to say. They're not rejecting you! They don't even know you.

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Rejection is a part of life. So is occasional sub-par performance. I have walked away from many skydives very disappointed with my performance. But you have to shake it off and keep going. If I allowed my disappointment to get to me, I would eventually stop jumping. And that would deprive me of something I truly love.

It is similar with cold calling. If you allow the rejection to get to you, it will profoundly impact your effectiveness. When you get the "nos," the terse responses, or even the hang ups – you have to be able to say to yourself, "Oh well, their loss. I'm sorry they're not able to take advantage of the wonderful product or service I am offering right now. But I am going to keep calling to find people who can" – and mean it.

Step 4 – Accept the Fear – Then Move Through It

No one likes being rejected or hearing "no." That is normal and okay. It is easy to allow the desire to succeed lapse into a desire not to fail – which can then lapse into fear.

Don't worry. Being fearful of rejection or failure is common and appropriate. What is important is that you not play games with yourself. If the fear is there, don't try to convince yourself it's not. Don't deny it.

Until you accept the presence of the fear, it's in charge. When you accept its presence and the fact that it is likely effecting you – you take a great deal of power away from the fear.

I have had to learn this lesson thoroughly in order to succeed as a Professional Exhibition Skydiver. If I had not learned to acknowledge and accept my fears, there is no way I could have successfully jumped into small landing areas on the middle of large cities or sporting events with audiences of over 100,000. (If you would like more information in this method of fear management, see the article called *You Want Me to Do What? – Risking to Win* at www.TakeRisks.com.) So, accept that the fear is there and that you're are experiencing it. Not doing so will hold you back.

Step 5 – Keep Dialing

You build momentum with each call. When you stop dialing, you lose it. Set things up so you have plenty of prospects to call before you get started. Do your research in advance. When it comes time to call, do it with a vengeance! The sooner you make the next call, regardless of whether it is a sale or not, the better. You build momentum. One sale will lead to another.

If the last call was not a success, it is even more important to pick up the phone right away. The longer you wait, the more likely it is to get to you.

Get Started

Cold calling will always be challenging. But you can make it more pleasant and be more successful at it by following these steps. Now get started. The sooner the better! It's time to leave the plane!

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Jim McCormick is an MBA, former corporate Chief Operating Officer, three time skydiving World Record holder and was a member of an international expedition that skydived to the North Pole. More information is available at <http://www.TakeRisks.com> and 970.577.8700.

Too Cold Call Or Not To Cold Call For Your Small Business

By Brandt Stohr

I hate cold-calling. In fact, there are a lot of horrible pains I would suffer before cold-calling someone. And I think that many small business owners feel the way I do.

It's true that there are a number of means of small business marketing - direct mail, personal letters, advertising, networking, public relations, internet marketing - and alas, cold calling is one of them. When it comes to small business marketing - any business activity, really - at some point you just have to buckle down and do what you gotta' do if you want to succeed. But is cold-calling one of those small business marketing activities that small business owners simply have to suffer through in order to succeed in business?

Some experts say, loudly and with vigor: "Yes!" Others say, "Absolutely not."

The truth about the value of cold-calling as part of your small business marketing strategy is that it's somewhere in between, and it depends on your particular business. If, for example, you retail small-dollar items through a catalog and on the Internet, cold-calling your potential customers probably isn't cost-effective: if each customer might spend \$10 with you, spending 20 minutes or more on the phone with that prospect doesn't make sense. If, on the other hand, you're a manufacturer of small-dollar items that you sell to retailers who may spend \$1,000 or more buying your products in bulk, then picking up the phone and making a call may well be worth your while.

If you decide to make cold-calling a part of your small business marketing strategy, there are a few things you can do to maximize the chances that your cold call will turn into a new client:

Cold-calling small business marketing tip #1: Take initiative. When you ask the potential client at the other end of the line "When would be a good time to meet?" you open the door for them to say "Never!" Instead, ask "How would next Tuesday at 11:00 work for you to meet?"

Cold-calling small business marketing tip #2: Approach the call with the idea that your goal is to help your prospective customer. Resist the urge to make the call about you - what you do, what you want. Instead, make the call about the prospect at the other end of the line. Ask the prospect about his needs and wants. Then suggest that you can help - and if he meets you next Tuesday at 11:00 you'll tell him how.

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Cold-calling small business marketing tip #3: Get to the point. The prospect at the other end of the line is going to feel, right off the bat, that you're wasting her time. So, by all means, be brief. Be clear and concise. Avoid saying "um."

Cold-calling small business marketing tip #4: Ask questions. This tip reflects back to small business marketing tip #2, making the call about the prospect, not about you. Asking questions also helps steer you to the right information and will help you tailor your sales pitch - for you to deliver at the appointment.

Cold-calling small business marketing tip #5: Save the sales pitch. Effective cold-calling isn't about selling your product or service. It's about getting an appointment so that you can sell your product or

service in person.

As with any small business marketing strategy, the best way to figure out if it works is to try it. Make enough cold calls so that you can accurately measure their effectiveness. Then compare that measurement to your other small business marketing tools.

Brandt Stohr, The Small Business Marketing Genius has brought startup one man operations to billion dollar corporations by using creative marketing techniques rather than investors and capital. Brandt Stohr has helped hundreds of entrepreneurs to get their small businesses exploding with sales without the use of expensive traditional marketing techniques. For more information and a free report on the ten deadly mistakes most small businesses are still making visit Brandt Stohr's site at

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