

Taking the *Chill* out of Cold Calls

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FIRST, UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF COLD CALLS

Before you read another word, complete the following sentence. We will revisit your answer in a moment:

1. "Cold calling is..."

What is a cold call really? Forget your negative associations for a moment, we'll get to those next. At its core a cold call is simply one party (the sales person) reaching out to another party (the prospect) to offer something that may be of value. But at an even deeper level, the cold call is nothing more than an attempt to find a fit between the sales person and the prospect. That's it – no selling, no pressure, no annoyance. A cold call is a way to find a fit between what you have and what another person could want/need/use.

NOW, UNDERSTAND YOUR RELUCTANCE

If you don't have any aversion to cold calling, if the words prospect or cold call or sales pitch don't leave you a wee bit chilled – congratulations! Skip to the next section of this worksheet. You have no cold call reluctance, and likely understand the importance of picking up the phone and connecting to strangers as a necessary component of sales.

If however, your teeth clench, your breath quickens, or you otherwise begin to feel anxious at the thought of making a cold call, you likely have some very limiting beliefs holding you back. Take a moment to consider your preconceptions and beliefs about cold calling. This is the source of your anxiety. Once you name your prejudice (and that's precisely what it is), it becomes easier to supplant your limiting beliefs with healthier ones.

1. Take a moment now to list some associations you have with the following words. Don't edit yourself. Write your first association.

- Salesperson _____
- Prospect _____
- Cold Call _____



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- Scripts _____
 - Voice Mail _____
2. To what degree are your current beliefs about the cold call holding you back? Spend a moment writing what your assumptions may be costing you. Think not just in terms of money but also enthusiasm, opportunities, connections, etc.

OVERCOME COLD CALLING RELUCTANCE

Generally speaking, the idea of “gutting it out” or “sucking it up”, or “just doing it”, doesn’t help when we are trying to change old habits and attitudes or create newer healthier ones. To affect a lasting and meaningful change, it almost always works best to explore the source of ones anxiety or limiting beliefs. But to do that you first have to name it as you did in the above exercise.

“We all have a certain set of beliefs or rules formed through our upbringing, education and experiences that influence our decisions and shape our attitude towards life and our career. Unfortunately there are those old limiting and confining beliefs that often keep us prisoner, stalling our professional growth and preventing us from creating greater selling opportunities.

Your outlook determines your outcome. In other words, what you believe to be true about cold calling is exactly what you'll continue to manifest in your career. So, if you believe that cold calling is:

- Forcing someone to accept something they don't want
- Intrusive, Annoying or Manipulative
- A waste of time
- Intimidating
- Scary
- Something I hate being subjected to myself, etc.

That's exactly what you'll continue to experience every time you cold call.”¹

1st Change your assumptions

2. Now try this. Consider from above your list of word associations. If you had a negative association, replace it here with an alternative, healthier belief. Write down a new list of positive associations. Mind you – this isn’t a way to dupe

¹ Keith Rosen, Profit Builders. “Effortless Prospecting” ©2003 www.profitbuilders.com



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yourself. It's simply a matter of replacing one belief with another equally valid one.

- Salesperson _____
- Prospect _____
- Cold Call _____
- Scripts _____
- Voice Mail _____

2. Now revisit how you completed the sentence; "Cold calling is..." at the start of this workbook. If you completed the sentence in any negative light, try it again with a positive spin.

Next, release the outcome

So often we distress ourselves with imaginings. Consider how worked up we get when thinking about an interview, a test, a presentation, a date – whatever. Almost always our anxiety flows from a fear that the outcome won't be what we want. But consider what would happen if you released your attachment to the outcome. What would it be like for you to make a sales call with no pressure to make the sale? What if your sole purpose was to explore the **possibility** of a fit?

Remember the essence of a cold call? It is to find a fit, nothing more. And there is only one way to do that – by asking questions. Instead of thinking about making a sale, what would it be like for you to make a cold call with the sole intention of uncovering needs to see if indeed there was a fit?

3. If you had absolutely no discomfort making cold calls, how might that impact your business? What would change? What might you get?

4. If you to start making regular cold calls, who would you call?



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SCRIPTING DO'S AND DONT'S²

OK, so you've challenged your internal negative assumptions. You've replaced old thought patterns with new ones. You believe that a few cold calls could serve you well, and you've thought of a few prospects to call. The big question is what will you say?

A compelling and natural sounding, scripted opening is arguably the most important part of your call. Your approach will meet two primary objectives. It will:

- Put the prospect in a positive state of mind
- Advance to the questioning phase of the call (to explore the fit)

One of the best ways to warm up a cold call is first to understand that you are interrupting someone's day. Consequently, it makes sense to request a phone appointment instead of assuming the prospect has time to speak with you right then and there. Now doesn't that seem a bit easier than trying to get the right person on the phone at the right time, so they are open to your proposition at that moment?

But before we get into asking for an appointment, let's consider a few other important elements of a successful cold call.

Important side note. You never know whether the person on the phone with you could be a great source of help or not. Assume that they will be. Write the secretary's names down and treat them like an advocate for you. Often they may be gatekeepers and will screen you out in a New York minute if you present like a typical sales person. Your purpose, at least as far as the gatekeeper is concerned, is to schedule a phone appointment with the "boss" to explore the potential fit that may exist between you.

Common Resistance Inducing Openings

First, put yourself in the position of prospects, and imagine how you would react if you heard these things at the beginning of calls.

- *"I want to talk about myself, my company, and my products."* As in, "The purpose of my call is to introduce my company to you and explain many of the great products/services we sell."
- *"I'm going to actually give you a long presentation of my products/services, right here in the opening, before you even have a chance to speak, even though I don't know anything about you or what you're interested in. There's a good chance I'll talk about a lot of things that have no relevance to you,*

^{2 2} Content adopted/copied with permission from Art Sobczak's [Telephone Selling Report](#) 402-895-9399



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and you'll be bored out of your mind." These are the openings that begin with a presentation.

- "Mr. Prospect, I'm calling to tell you about ABC Industries, and our line of grobblestymers. We are the largest in the business, and have a full line of yadda, yadda, yadda . . ."
- *"I'm going to ask you to buy something (or otherwise make a commitment) before you're emotionally or logically ready to go there."* Quick decisions make many people nervous. Especially when they involve money, being sold, or investing time.
- *"Even though you get piles of unsolicited mail every day, I'm calling to see if you read the stuff that I sent you."* "I'm calling about a letter and catalog/brochure/folder I sent you. Did you have a chance to read that?"
- *"I'm going to ask you questions and take your time, but you don't know why, and I haven't given you any reason to listen to me, or answer my self-serving queries."* "I'm Sheldon Snodgrass with SlowSales.com. We're a major supplier of sales training material. What kinds of trainings do you offer there?"

Identify what you really deliver

Prospects want to know how you can help them, not what you do. Consider the difference in the following two examples:

- "I'm Sheldon Snodgrass with XYZ Company. We are major distributors for all the name brand ____ and ____ accessories."

VS

- "I'm Sheldon Snodgrass with XYZ Company. We help ____ (large, small, privately owned, etc.) decrease the total cost of inventory ownership by..." or "identify new sources of income and cost savings, by...."

This is a crucial but often overlooked element of not only cold calls but also Any opportunity to introduce yourself. Indeed, identifying what you really deliver is so important that Jay Conrad Levinson; the Author of the Guerrilla Marketing Series of books considers it one of seven key sentences in a seven sentence marketing plan.

1. Take a moment to write down the benefits of doing business with you. This is often called a value proposition, or unique selling proposition (USP). Some people refer to it as an elevator pitch. Whatever you call it, think about why a prospect should buy from you. What makes you special? Here is where you would consider and leverage the unique strengths of your business.
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Avoid discussing your product or service in the opening

2. Analyze your own openings. Are you inciting resistance by talking product/service instead of results? If so, brainstorm for the loss you help people avoid, or what you help them gain. Then work those ideas into your opening, and move quickly to the questions.

Some things I help people avoid:

Some things I help people gain:

Use what you know about the company.

The more you know about a prospect and his/her situation, the better able you are to generate interest by appealing to their specific situation. Dig around, ask questions of operators, screeners, salespeople in the prospect's organization prospect's department, or anyone else for that matter. After introducing yourself, say to these folks:

- "I hope you can help me. I'm going to be speaking with Ms. Bigg at your company, and I want to be sure I'm on target with my questions. There's probably some information you could provide that would be useful."

Then proceed with questions about the areas you specifically work in. Then you could use whatever you collect to tailor an interest-generating opening. For example:

- "Ms. _____, I understand you're now in the process of (whatever change you know they might be going through/project they're working on), and I might have something here that might make that process easier as it relates to the (pick an area: installation, implementation, staffing, funding, etc.) I'd like to schedule a brief phone appointment to discuss a couple of ideas to determine if we could be of service."

Don't Waste Opportunities on Initial Calls

Often, people will waste an opportunity on a prospecting call by saying this in their opening: *"I'm Pat Jones with ABC Company. I'd like to send you some information about our services and then follow up with you later, OK?"* This is a feeble effort, since 99% of the prospects say, "Sure, send it," which they view as an easy way to get the caller off the line. Then, come follow-up time, they are unreachable, or very



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cold towards the caller. If your goal is to get information in the hands of the prospect, let them know that, but also let them know they have to do something for it, and that there is a potential gain for them. Now you can seize the opportunity to qualify, and sell the prospect on your ideas. You are still likely to send material, but using this process they will WANT to receive it and read it.

- "Mr. Prospect, I'm Sheldon Snodgrass with XYZ Company. I'd like to mail you some information that describes how we help ___ retailers insure they are stocking the most profitable products. Did I reach you at an opportune moment? (Wait for response.) Great, may I ask a few questions so I can tailor the package to your specific situation." Again, the literature is used as non-threatening way to get the prospect to listen. Since they are interested, they'll answer the questions, and you will have a much more productive call, and will be able to send information that is more meaningful.

Opening rules, ideas and tips

Remember you have two objectives for you opening:

1. Put them in a positive frame of mind.
2. Move them to the questioning part of the call.

On follow up calls

Have Value Added Points on Every Call. If you are truly calling to keep your name in front of them, fine. It's necessary to build "mindshare." But this is only successful if they feel they received something as a result of the call. Be prepared with useful news, new ideas, information about how some of your other customers are taking fuller advantage of some of the things they are buying now, and so on.

On prospecting calls

Avoid using Weasel Words. Weasel Words appear out of the blue with cocky claims like "I can show you how you can do thus and so, guaranteed," If you use such language in your opening, people will furrow their brow, wince, and look at their handset thinking to themselves, "who IS this used car salesman?" Instead, ease in with words like, "might be able to...", "there's a possibility..." depending on what you're doing now..."

Grab their attention

Put yourself in the position of the person you're calling, and ask yourself, "**What is it I want most as it relates to purchasing from a _____**" The answer ;less cost, ease of use, quick turnaround time, etc. will likely be the reasons people buy from you. This is why it's so important to identify what you really deliver, and why you should take the time to craft a compelling benefit statement.

WRITING YOUR SCRIPT

OK, now you have some rule for the road. You know for example that:



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- A cold call is about trying to find a fit.
- You are asking for a phone appointment not making a pitch right away.
- You know that questions are the answer because you are not pitching, but rather discovering.
- You know that you need a compelling value proposition to appeal to the prospect.

Now it's time to start writing.

Write it first, then revise it

Anyone who writes anything will vouch for the fact that their first draft is usually garbage. (For some of us it's more than that!) Many writers trash their first draft, start over, and *then* begin the editing and fine-tuning process. So what's this got to do with cold calling? It underscores the importance of first writing out the most important piece of your call: the opening. When you wing an opening statement with a disjointed stream-of-consciousness collection of thoughts, it's like a writer submitting a first draft for publication. Both are destined for the scrap heap. Write out your openings, word for word, edit them, let them age for awhile, come back again, repeat the process a few times, and then you might have something very worthwhile.

Now take a crack at writing an opening that you might make with a live prospect

Now what would you say if you got the prospects voice mail?

How to Edit Your Openings

- When editing your opening, scrutinize every word and idea. Ask yourself, "Is this adding to the effectiveness of the opening?" If not, cut it, or reword it. Sales reps often get wordy with things that just take up space and time in an opening.



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- Also ask, "Is there anything here someone could potentially object to?"
- Reword openings so they sound good when spoken. Use contractions, informal language, build in pauses, and use sentence fragments.

BEYOND THE COLD CALL

So you have made a good opening. The dialog is advancing, now how do you advance the sale? Bear in mind your ultimate aim is to answer the questions: "If not now, when?" & "If not you, who?" Consider the following questions as a way to reach your ultimate aim.

Sample questions

- "Who else would be involved in a decision to purchase ____?"
- "How are decision like this usually made?" (Who makes them and when?)
- "What other important things do you need to realize when spending money on ____?"
- "At this point it probably makes sense to send you some information about ____ product. I could then follow up with you in a week or two to see if any bells went off. Can we schedule a time now for that follow up conversation."
- Role Play responses to the following objections:
 - *"It's too expensive."*
 - *"We wouldn't be interested."*
 - *"Our ____ budget is already allocated."*
 - *"We only buy from one supplier."*
 - *"How much does this cost?"*
 - *"Could you send me some information?"*
 - *"Let me think about it."*



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Ideas for follow up call openings

Your follow-up call opening should serve to smoothly bring the customer's state-of-mind back to the point where it was when you ended the previous conversation. The opening should not:

- Ask for a decision: ". . . calling to see if you're ready to buy now . . ."
- Be simply reactive: ". . . and I was just checking to see if you had any questions..."
- A quality test of the postal service or their internal mail handling: ". . . wanted to see if you received the material I sent . . ."

Your follow-up call needs to be based upon an objective for this call. When you think about it logically, there must have been some reason why you've agreed to follow up, right? (If not, this might be a sign you're getting the brush-off from lots of folks, causing you to waste time chasing shadows. For example: "Well, just call me back in about six weeks.")

Good reasons for following up include either, they were to do something between the last call and the scheduled follow-up that would make this call worthwhile, or, a future event would take place that would make the follow-up more appropriate, such as a new budget year beginning. The opening needs to bring them into a conversation that readdresses the hot points fueling their interest last call, and also serves to move the process closer to the ultimate action you're seeking (the sale)

Follow-Up Opening Example

Remember, you're not calling to just check in. You should bring something new the table, some value-added reason for this call, beyond what was covered last time. This way, if their interest has waned since the last contact, and/or they didn't follow through with what they said they'd do (which happens quite often) you still have a basis for continuing this contact. For example,



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- “Kathy, it’s Sheldon Snodgrass calling to continue our conversation from last week. I’ve got some good news on the research I did for you, and also I’d like to go through your thoughts on the proposal I faxed you...”

SEVEN STEPS OF THE SALES PROCESS

1. Product Knowledge

This step is fairly straight forward, but it is also the great undoing of many a product expert turned sales person. When one is extremely well versed in a particular product especially a technical one, it is easy to get caught up in a monologue of all the great features it provides. The technical expert turned sales person is so eager to explain how the product works or why it’s unique that the benefits to the customer are left out of the discussion.

Never assume that a prospect will easily link a feature to a benefit. That relationship must be stated clearly (something done in the presentation *step 5*, after the needs assessment *step 4*). The acquiring of product knowledge for a “technician” therefore is less about the features of the product itself, and more about how the customer will benefit from those features.

When discussing product, the technicians mantra should be; “**So what?!**” Consider those two words to be what the prospect thinks every time a feature is mentioned, and re-learn you product from that perspective.

Your Value Proposition. What do you sell - really?

The approach script, the elevator pitch, or the unique selling proposition, (USP), whatever you call it, it should strive to answer a single question: “Why should the prospect buy from me?”

Take a crack at creating a punchy proposition. Follow these guidelines:

- Keep it short – twenty to thirty seconds max. Be sure to nail down what do you do or what are you selling, what makes you different or special, and why a prospect should buy from you.

Now ask yourself these questions?

1. Can I describe what I sell in short, clear, layman’s language?



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2. Is my description compelling enough to move a prospect along the sales path?

2. Prospecting

Prospecting, just as the word implies is about searching for new customers. Like product knowledge, this step may seem fairly straightforward but upon closer examination it becomes more complex. The key to prospecting effectively is knowing **where to dig and what to look for.**

It's also important to distinguish between a lead, a prospect, and a qualified prospect. The most important element in this step is to create a profile of existing customers. This may have been done at your company, but have approach tactics (*step3*) been tailored to match each profile. For instance, you may have identified the following major market segments: Economic Development Authorities, Boutique Retailers, Consulting Firms, Event Producers, and Private Schools, but have you fully profiled each of these in order to adjust your approach tactics accordingly (*step 3*)?

A direct call to a business owner might work well to generate retail leads, but will it be effective in developing consulting firm leads? For each market segment **do you really know what the ideal customer looks like, and who the decision makers are?** These questions should be answered fully in the "Tactics" portion of a marketing plan, and at least partially in your pre call planning.

In the broadest sense, prospecting is an ongoing process that everyone in the company should be involved in. This simply means everyone should have their "prospecting radar" up when they are out and about in the world. Very often, a great lead turned customer was first discovered after being heard or seen in the news, at a party, or event, etc.

Who ya gonna call

Remember that pesky little marketing planning exercise? One portion of that plan should have revealed the answer to the question about where you should focus your efforts – that is your **target market.** Of all the people who would benefit from your offer, who among them is most worth your time?

1. Re-examine your product offering and your value proposition. Does a particular type of prospect emerge? If so describe them here.

2. Who are most like your current and best customers? (Think about who spends the most, who repeats the most, who send referrals, who is a pleasure to do business with.)



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3. Where can you find them? _____

3. The Approach

This is where the rubber meets the road in the sales process. For our present purposes let's consider the approach in the context of a sales call rather than lead generation (i.e. the difference between a mass mailing and a telephone call). This is the step where you **begin to build a relationship and the intelligence gathering continues** (it started with prospecting). A good approach is crucial to sales success because it will either identify you as a bothersome salesperson and cause a prospect's guard to go up, or it will identify you as an obliging salesperson with something of value to offer. (There is probably a middle road too, but you get the idea.). Consider the following example:

Your product is golf range equipment, about which you presumably have sufficient knowledge. You prospect by a variety of means, including scanning the house lists for appropriately titled leads, (generated by earlier sales efforts). You approach by saying "Good Morning, this is _____ from GolfIsUs. I'm calling because I see that we had the opportunity to provide you with some widgets back in _____. If I'm calling at an opportune time I'd like to share a special promotion that we developed for our previous customers." Then the dialog begins, often it's perfunctory, other times however it can be extremely informative. The difference more often than not depends on how astute and articulate you are, and more importantly, how compelling your approach is.

After your introduction, write then very next sentence you would utter? Write it for a Decision maker and for an administrator.

*Additional Note on recording information: Regardless of the type of call or the results, it is important to take detailed call notes and schedule a subsequent action item, no matter what or when it is be it a week, a month, or a year down the road. (One can invent a system of abbreviations to make this easier i.e. LVM = left voice mail.) History notes are important for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is tracking where a prospect is in the sales process, including what follow up is necessary and when. Noting that "packet was mailed" or "referred by a friend" or "inquired about pricing" is only half the information and not the most important. Why? (What's missing?)



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4. The Needs Assessment

This is arguably the most important step of the sales process because it allows you to determine how you can truly be of service, or more importantly whether there is a match between what you offer and what the prospect needs. To be a highly effective salesperson, that is to sell to the prospect's needs, you first have to understand what those needs are. This means you must **think in terms of solving a prospects problem**. The only way to do that is by asking lots of questions. Does a health practitioner prescribe remedies before a thorough exam?

The world famous motivation speaker, Anthony Robbins says, "Questions are the answer." Asking good questions will not only help you determine what will best suit the prospects needs, but it builds confidence, trust, and will very often help the prospect consider issues they may never have thought of. This last point is powerful because it provides an opportunity to showcase features, which the prospects answers led you to. Although intelligence gathering occurs throughout the sales process, it is at step four where it happens in earnest.

1. What other information would be important to gather at this stage? (Hint: who's who, referrals)

2. If you had only 5 questions your were able to ask a decision-maker what would those questions be (Hint: open ended)

5. The Presentation

Remember the discussion in step one, focus on benefits rather than features? If you consider your product/service in terms of how it benefits the customer, your presentation will be a focused and relevant dialogue rather than a self-aggrandizing monologue. Nothing is worse than a sales presentation that proceeds from the seller's perspective. This is why the needs assessment is so important and why it



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will ideally flow in and out of this step. A good needs assessment allows you to tailor your presentation to your audience, and keep it interactive.

6. The Close

Eighty percent of sales are lost because a salesperson fails to close. Closing is about advancing the sales process to ultimately get an order. What you are trying to sell at each stage may be different. For example, **a close early in the sales process may be to get an appointment** to discuss your offering; in that case you are selling an appointment not a widget. In a later stage you might need to meet with a committee, in that case what you are selling is a meeting.

Seeing the sale process in this light takes a little pressure off of each encounter and makes things a bit more manageable. But don't be lulled into complacency, you must ultimately ask for the order and no sales conversation should ever end without an agreement to some next step.

1. **Do not be satisfied with "we'll get back to you"**, where is the agreement in that? What could you say in response to such a remark in order to advance the sale?

2. In large part, closing is about discovering obstacles. Have you heard these before: "I'll need to think about it.", "It's too expensive.", "Let me run it buy some other people." "Sounds good but I've already got one." What could you say to overcome these objections?

There are lots of ways to close. Indeed closing a sale has become a science unto itself. Books have been written on this topic alone. But there is **one elemental truth - if you don't ask you don't get**. Just for fun, following is a sampling of a few closing techniques from among the many. However, don't get too caught up in these. What really matters is that you ask for the business.

- The Ask For It Close. "What needs to happen for you to feel comfortable making a commitment to _____?"



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- The If-Then Close. "If I could demonstrate how _____ provides you with... (things you know are important based on the prospect needs assessment) then would you be willing to make a commitment in _____ weeks?"
- The Process Of Elimination Close. "So you like the targeted demographics, you have use for it, it's not too expensive...!"
- The Lost Puppy Close. "I guess I didn't do my job very well. Tell me, if you were to be interested in _____ How would you go about purchasing it?"

Additional note: The question "How much does it cost?" is a great buying signal yet it is a question you want to avoid early in the sales process. When you do mention price, don't be afraid that it may be too high, say it with pride and don't forget to ask for the referral. How would handle this question?

7. Follow-up

Good follow up will double your closing ratio. When a sales person makes contact with a prospect a relationship has been built, and follow up is how it is nurtured. Staying at the forefront of a prospect's mind requires persistence and should not be confused with being bothersome. This is why it's important to **get agreement on some next step each time there is contact**. Follow up therefore should never end. The pace may slow but it will never end. When a sale is made, then a new type of follow up begins.

Follow up conversations are best handled by the salesperson who started the relationship. Who else can better gauge a prospect's "willingness to buy", or pick up where "we last left off". This means that detailed notes must be kept on each prospect with particular emphasis on their "state of mind". It is unwise and ineffective to **keep track of this information anywhere other than a centralized database**.

Additional note: It's important to hold some follow up ammunition in reserve. Overwhelming your prospects with every piece of information you possess on their first request, hampers your ability to stay in touch. Having a stable of collateral materials gives you reason to follow up.

