

THAWING THE COLD CALL

*Learn to value the telephone—
it's your most vital marketing tool*

Whether you're running a company solo or you have a staff of 45, if you're not out there prospecting, sooner or later you're going to land on your face. So what's the most powerful marketing tool to get and keep customers? The telephone. The most efficient way to make personal contact, it saves large amounts of time and money, and eliminates travel. It's the fastest way to qualify prospects and decide whether you should invest any more effort or money to turn them into customers. It's time for you and your team to refresh your over-the-phone skills to make the calls count.

Except in some specific industries, "cold calling" is inefficient and, very frequently, not even effective for most businesses. People don't like getting calls and you don't like making them. So don't cold call. Only follow up on direct mail or "warm" referrals. Your company won't stop telemarketing, but you can address the stress surrounding it.

WARM CONNECTIONS

How can you say goodbye to "cold calling?"

- 1) Change your vocabulary. Eliminate the words from your language. Call it "telemarketing," "connecting," "introducing yourself" or "making contact." Changing how you think about cold calls really helps.
- 2) Only call people with whom you can connect. They may have heard of you in some way before your telephone call, such as a direct mail piece. You might have some information on them that you received from an associate of theirs. The slightest bit of data or the slimmest commonality elimi-

nates a cold start. For established, successful businesses, there truly are no cold calls.

- 3) Plan your approach. If buying a list, the quality directly affects your success. A quality list starts you with preliminary information, like number of employees or membership in an association. Use a promotion or interesting facts to grab immediate attention so they'll want to hear your entire pitch.



- 4) Use intent. Decide what you intend to

achieve from your telemarketing session, such as producing three leads in the next two hours. Do this once or twice a week for a year, and

you'll grow significantly. It makes you focus on a goal instead of potential rejection. Most of us fear the actual moment of rejection rather than talking with a stranger.

- 5) Be warm. Always connect with sincerity. Listen closely to pauses between others' words to tune in to the person and stay alert and focused. Your tone is more important than what you say. Master connecting with new prospects in the first five seconds.
- 6) Credentialize yourself quickly. "Hello, Mr. Johnson? This is Martin from Customer Catcher.com. Hope I've caught you at a good time? For years, we've had success increasing technology companies' customer bases by up to 30 percent a year. If you're interested, I can tell you more." This tells the prospect that I am trying to respect their time while informing that I specialize in his or her

industry. It also makes a big fat claim that can lead to further discussion, even if it's a debate.

- 7) Stop taking every call so personally. It's business and only becomes personal when the contact becomes your friend as a satisfied customer. There's little point in feeling upset over a rejection. Say thank you and move on. You are qualifying people to do business with you that recognize the value you offer.
- 8) Do not pause between calls. Take notes on

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the fly. You'll get into a flow and time will pass quickly. You'll attain intense concentration that draws prospects' interest, and more results than you expected.

- 9) Have a system to capture information as the prospect speaks. Use contact management software to type in information as you hear it. Personally, I use Goldmine Software from FrontRange Solutions.
- 10) If you have contact data or other facts about the prospect before the call, pretype them into your computer. This is the beginning of your personal customer relationship management (CRM) system. Enter your next action at the same time. If you offer to send supporting marketing documents, this is a great way to make sure you keep your promises. It's vital to start building trust and credibility and create a great first impression with your prospective customers.



Martin Wales, The Customer Catcher™, helps generate easy, profitable sales by "Skipping the Selling and Getting to the Sales™." For more information, visit www.customercatcher.com.