

## Hot Cold Calls - 7 Steps to Turning Cold Calls into Hot Appointments

When you hear the term "cold-calling," a number of thoughts may come up for you. You're calling people you don't know, you may not get through to them, and if you do, they may not want to talk to you. Doesn't sound like much fun, does it?

Having been a salesperson for many years, I've made my share of cold calls. Recently I decided I wanted to offer Oasis water cooler to a company located in the area where I live. I developed a list of their branches, created a letter, e-mailed the letter to the appropriate contact person at each branch, and started making calls. Lo and behold, I was able to get a meeting. I met with the prospect, learned about the company's water requirements, and submitted a proposal. The outcome is that the company is interested and I'll be meeting with the decision-maker shortly. This happened because I created a step-by-step process and followed it.

With a clear plan in place, cold-calling leads to appointments that lead to sales. Let's take a look at the cold-calling process and how to make it work for you.

Set a strong foundation for making calls. Begin by targeting an industry. Then make a list of companies, names of people to reach, phone numbers, and people's e-mail addresses. Visit websites to learn more about each company. Is a particular company growing or launching a new product? Did it have a great year? Write a letter introducing your company and your services. Mention early in the letter a success story based on what you found on their website. Talk about how you've successfully helped similar companies and you can do the same for them. Send the letter by e-mail or "snail" mail. Send several letters at a time and begin making calls 2-3 days later.

The goal of your initial telephone call is to set the appointment and only to set the appointment. Every business has its own sales cycle. Getting in the door is step one. On a cold call or introductory call you are not selling your product or service, you are getting a meeting. You want your prospect to give you 15-20 minutes so you can introduce yourself, your company, your product and your service. That is it!

Call when you have the best chance to reach the prospect. The best time to reach a prospect often is early in the morning before his or her assistant is in and before the prospect gets caught up in the day. Lunchtime or after 5 are two other good times to reach the prospect directly.

Grab their attention in 10 seconds. A prospect is not expecting your call, so you must get his or her attention instantly. A 10-second introduction is what you say when you shake someone's hand, call someone on the phone, or stand up in front of a group. It describes what you do and whom you do it for in a clear and memorable way. After you have a prospect's attention, mention you're following up on the letter you sent.

The purpose of your call is twofold:

**(1)** To find out if this lead is actually a good prospect for you and, if so, **(2)** to get an appointment to make a presentation. After your 10-second introduction, move immediately to ask a question, such as, "Do you have a moment to talk about how I can help your company get better quality water for your employees?" Or, "I understand your company is buying bottled water. Would you be interested in knowing how I can help you cut your costs in half?" If the need is there, ask for a meeting on the spot.

When asking for the appointment, state you'll only need about 15 minutes of their time. Once the meeting actually takes place, you'll almost always get more time, but it's a good idea to be sensitive to time constraints. Give a few choices. Example: "I'll be seeing clients in your area early next week. Would Monday or Tuesday work for you?" Then, "Which is better, morning or afternoon?" People will choose when they have choices.

Get on the phone like a winner! Your success in cold-calling depends on how you project your voice on the phone. A prospect can't see you so it's all in the way you speak. Project enthusiasm, confidence, and energy. SMILE! Have a mirror in front of you, and smile into the mirror as you speak. The prospect will sense your energy and enthusiasm.

## **ASSIGNMENT**

Make a list of five companies you would like to get into to make a presentation, the people you want to reach, their phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Visit the company's website to learn more.

Write your introductory letter and send them out.

Schedule time on your calendar to start making calls.

Get on the phone with confidence, enthusiasm and a big SMILE!

Write a 10-second introduction describing what you do and whom you do it for in a clear, concise and memorable way.

Prepare and ask 2-3 probing questions that qualify the prospect.

Then ask for the meeting.