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The Dreaded Cold Call

By *Bill Caskey, President Caskey Achievement Strategies*

Every business experiences a moment when their sales leads dry up and they must start fresh. Don't panic – cold calling does not have to make you look weak.



By being proactive and operating with a higher intent, you can make the most of your situation ... and prevent it from happening again.

Last week I received a call from a panicked client – “Bill, our funnel is empty! We just had five prospects go away and we have no pipeline. I'm going to tell my people to get on the phone and make calls. We need business!”

It was time for the dreaded cold call. That's right, the strategy that everyone says 'doesn't work' – The call that everyone talks about but no one makes. What advice could I give my client who was feeling desperate? Here were my five suggestions.

1. Make 'em before you need 'em. Everyone forgets this rule. The worst time to make a cold call is when you must have new business. Why? You're too attached. You reek of desperation. And you sound needy. No one wants to do business with a needy person. If cold calling is a marketing tactic that you must do, then make them all of the time, not just when you need to set appointments.

2. Get your head in the (mind) game. Most people don't. They pick up the phone and start dialing, never thinking about the anatomy of the call. Change your perspective from “I need new prospects” to “I wonder if they are a fit.” Not all prospects are right for you, regardless of how badly you need business. Without a change in perspective, you will sound desperate and needy (See Rule #1). Change your thoughts and the words will follow.

3. Research nothing. I hear supposedly savvy sales people talk about the extensive research they conduct before making the call. Bad move. First, you are wasting valuable call time if you are on the internet doing research. Second – because I know the mind of a salesperson – you'll blurt out some fun fact you learned on their Web site and they will view it as contrived and manipulative. You lose on both counts. Just make the call and see Rule #4. The less you know, the better. If you get invited in, then – and only then – will you do research.

4. Tell the truth. Everyone wants to hear the truth, but few want to tell it. Acknowledge your position to the prospect upfront – “I'm not sure if what I have to offer is of any use to you.” It comes from a place of high integrity. You really don't know if what you have fits, so why not tell them that? Stop trying to “get someone to do something.” It is not truthful and that attitude will prohibit prospects from being honest with you.

5. Give prospects an “out”. Remember, they are not sitting in their office waiting for your call (or any call from a salesperson), so relieve a little pressure upfront. Tell them “it's OK if there is no fit.” Once that pressure is no longer weighing on them, you are a lot more likely to get the truth. Once you have

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explained what your offer is—or, better, what your value is—then tell them, “I’m not sure if this is something you’re open to looking at right now.” That, too, is the truth. I hate manipulation. Remarkably, there are still trainers who make a living using the tired old move, “If I could show you a way to save money, would you invite me in?” If you’re using that, fire your trainer or change professions. It is contrived and disingenuous. Cut the moves and tell the truth – You’ll get much further.

One Last Tip

Create a habit of making cold calls frequently and when you don’t need the business. Think you’re better than that? After 25 years in the sales business, do you consider yourself above making cold calls? Think again. The best in the business make them every day. Several years ago, I heard a Donald Trump interview where he said his favorite prospecting tool is driving by a great property and calling to see if they want to sell. You don’t think that’s a cold call?

“Lead generation” is the heading under which cold calling falls. If you have enough great leads coming in without calling, then shelve cold calls. But in all my years of experience, I have come across very few marketing departments that consistently deliver enough significant leads to drive the activities of their sales force. It’s up to you to make it happen.

Bill Caskey is president of Caskey Achievement Strategies, specialists in Business to Business sales development. He is the author of “Same Game New Rules: 23 Contemporary Insights for Selling and Negotiating”. (www.samegamenewrules.com) For more information on Caskey Achievement Strategies’ consulting services, visit www.caskeytraining.com or call 317.575.0057.



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