

## **More Sales with Less Effort Making Cold Calls Enjoyable ... Impossible?**

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**More Sales with Less Effort: Making Cold Calls Enjoyable ... Impossible?**

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Have you ever wondered why there are still companies that use cold calls to acquire new business even though most people hang up sooner or later on most cold calls?

It's the so-called 'numbers game' which goes approximately like this:

- You call 100 people.
- Five to 10 people listen to you for a while for whatever reason (because they're polite, or feel sorry for the cold caller or ...)
- Two to three people are at the moment searching exactly for the kind of product or service offered in the cold call.
- One of them eventually buys.

So you just need to make hundreds or thousands of calls and you will eventually get the business you wanted.

Unfortunately, this business development approach has a number of considerable disadvantages:

- Chances are good that you will ruin the image of your company.
- It is highly frustrating to the cold caller to be continuously rejected.
- It is actually unethical because you annoy most people you call.
- It is a huge waste of time and energy.

Let me make it clear upfront: I believe in cold calls, provided they are done with integrity and respect for the person being called. Cold calls can be a fast track to getting new business from your target customers, whom you might not easily reach otherwise.

However, to make every cold call meaningful and enjoyable, you will need to change a few things in your approach.

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## 1. Opening

Keep in mind that the first impression you make will be decisive in the outcome of your cold call. People typically form a first impression about you 12–19 seconds from the first verbal or non-verbal (the latter not relevant in cold calls) communication with you.

Hence, your opening is crucial!

### Some Tips:

- Don't sound like a cold caller.
- First ask for permission (just because people pick up the phone doesn't mean that it's a good time for them to speak with you). Asking permission shows respect.
- Do as much research as possible on the person or company you want to call.
- Adjust your pace, voice, and speaking style to the way the person being called speaks (don't mimic the other person though, just stretch your natural style to get closer and still remain yourself). It will make the person you call feel more comfortable talking to you.

## 2. Elevator Speech

Early in the conversation your counterpart will want to know which company you are calling from and the purpose of your call. Ideally, you prepare a compelling "elevator speech" which should be as concise and engaging as possible.

An elevator speech is a short statement of about 20-30 seconds (typically the time it takes to travel some floors up in an elevator) which should answer the question: "Why should I continue talking with you?"

## **Some Tips:**

- Don't use the words "are you interested in..." Better use "would you be open..."
- Don't bore your counterpart with details of your service/product or what your company is all about; instead, say why other people/companies buy your products/services and share this with the person you call.
- Don't imply that the person you call has a problem; rather, say that you have helped others solve such problems. Better yet, tell them what benefits others got from buying from you.
- Make your statement as general as possible and as specific as necessary.

## **3. About Scripts**

Throw away any cold call script you might have – they rarely work. Instead, write down some key statements like your opening line and your elevator speech. The opening line you can always use; the elevator speech you most probably will need at some point.

There might be some frequently asked questions in your line of business. Write down some compelling and concise answers so that you can pull them out as needed

Since every person you call is in a unique situation, you need to be highly flexible with your approach. Rather than use a script, learn to become very sensitive and responsive to each situation. Every situation is unique!

## **4. About Intentions**

I often ask sales people in my seminars: "Which outcome would you like to have from this call?" A frequent answer is: "I would like to get a meeting with the person I call."

This intention leads to a couple of problems:

- a) You actually limit the potential success of your call to getting a meeting; there is always a chance to take it further in the very first call, perhaps even to the point of closing a sale. I know it's rare but in most cases not impossible.
- b) Worse than that is, with this intention in mind you consciously or subconsciously push the other party to grant you a meeting. Chances are good that you reap resistance or get meetings that lead nowhere. It becomes a waste of time for both you and the other party.

I find it more useful (and respectful) to set the intention of taking the phone conversation as far as the other party is comfortable to go. That could mean getting permission to send more info, follow up with another call, set a meeting, send a quotation, or even close the deal. I never know before I pick up the phone.

The advantages of this intention is that I make the best out of each call, that I am being respectful, and that I don't impose any undue pressure.

## **5. About Preparation**

I recently got a call from a logistics company salesman. He rambled on and on about how great their service is, how competitive their rates are and God knows what. Since I'm a polite guy, I let him finish and didn't hang up right away. I then asked him if he knew what kind of business I'm in. The answer was as expected: "No."

A little research on my company would have saved time for him and me because it's quite obvious that the transportation needs for Progress-U are non-existing.

Using Google, Yahoo and other search engines gives you in most cases sufficient information to figure out if a call makes sense in the first place.

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## **Making every call meaningful**

If you don't want to be treated like a cold caller, then don't behave like a typical one. Be creative, different, perhaps even funny.

Think: "How much does the person being called care about you at the moment you call?" Right, not one bit. So you need to make a compelling case why it would potentially be worth the time of the person being called to talk to you. If you can't answer this question, better don't call.

If you want to gain some basic trust from the other party, show that you truly care for their (not your!) outcome. Make it clear that you have no idea if your product or service would be really a good match for them. You call because you want to see if there is an opportunity for adding value to each other.

Conclusion: To make every cold call meaningful, it is crucial that you develop an ideal mindset and use words that don't make you sound like other cold callers. Truly respect the other person and learn to be sensitive and as a result act flexibly. Do your homework before you call.

Most people actually enjoy good conversations, so make them enjoyable for both, the potential buyer and you.

Good luck!



Charlie Lang is an Executive Coach and Trainer who founded Progress-U Limited in 2002. His mission is to achieve a positive change of the image of sales. He is a passionate and professional Executive Coach, Mentor Coach, Trainer, Public Speaker and Author of articles related to leadership, change management and innovative sales.

In 2004, he initiated the Master Coach Alliance ( see <http://www.master-coach-alliance.com> ) in Hong Kong, a network of professional Life, Business and Corporate Coaches. End of 2004, he started authoring the book "The Groupness Factor" ( see <http://www.progressu.com.hk/Groupness-book.htm> ) which got published in August 2005. 14 of his articles got printed in publications like Human Resources, FZ Magazine, Banking Today and CareerTimes.

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