

There's No Such Thing as a Warm Call

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A sales call is either cold or hot. Fortunately, there is a way to make nothing but hot calls, with a fantastic rate of return. The secret is referrals.

A cold call is one that's made to someone who doesn't know you and is not expecting your call. Salespeople can delude themselves into thinking they are making "warm calls" when in fact they're making cold calls.

Consider the following situations:

- You call someone because you got the name came from a colleague or friend. Cold!
- You call someone and then follow up with a letter. Cold!
- The person's name came from a specific list. Still cold!

These are all cold calls — the person doesn't know you and is not expecting your call. Even though you think you've been able to avoid sounding like a telemarketer, this type of call is still cold. And cold calling is a numbers game. If we make 100 calls, we'll talk to about 20 people, schedule 10 appointments, and if we're lucky, close one new deal. That's a 1 percent return on our time.

Not only does cold calling have a low percentage return, those who do it and those who receive them rarely have a positive attitude about cold calls. Recent research by Huthwaite® surveyed both sellers and buyers about their attitudes on prospecting:

Sellers

- 63 % of salespeople say cold calling is what they most dislike about their jobs
- 88 % of salespeople work for companies that consider prospecting important

Buyers

- 91% of buyers never respond to an unsolicited inquiry
- 71% of buyers find cold calls annoying
- 88% of buyers will have nothing to do with cold callers
- 94% of buyers couldn't remember a single prospector or message they had received during the last two years

Obviously cold calls aren't working. In fact, why would you settle for the illusion of a "warm call" when you can make genuine hot calls?

A call is hot when there's an introduction. The person knows who the caller is and is expecting the call. This is the kind of call that shortens the sales cycle, increases a salesperson's credibility, results in qualified prospects, and means a new client more than 50 percent of the time! Why would you waste your time doing anything else?

Here's how to get HOT calls:

1. Make a list of everyone you know — current clients, past clients, peers, neighbors, service providers, friends, past co-workers, volunteer groups, etc. You should have at least 100 names. Prioritize the list so that the people that you know the best are at the top.

2. Set a goal and decide how many people you will contact each week. Arrange in-person meetings if at all possible.
3. Tell your referral sources that you are building your business through referrals and would like their help. Describe your ideal client and ask for one or two people who meet your description.
4. When your referral source makes a suggestion, find out as much as you can about the person and his company.
5. Then ask your referral source to make the introduction. The introduction could be by phone, in person, or by e-mail.

Start thinking about how you spend your time and the type of payoff you want. Get HOT! Get that introduction!

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