



## The Best Ways to Make Cold Calls

*Five ideas to help you overcome fear and get results, with special tips for service, sales and manufacturing companies.*

Most small business owners look forward to cold calling about as much as oral surgery. But it doesn't need to be painful and, if done correctly, can result in a significant boost of your annual income, say sales experts and fellow business owners. Here are five ideas to help you master the art of the cold call.

**1. Set aside a "power hour" every day,** says Skip Miller, president and founder of M3 Learning, a sales and sales management company based in Los Gatos, California.

"It's like working out in the morning," Miller says. He jokes that, like exercise, cold calling can be put off with excuses. Force yourself to be disciplined and to keep going with your cold calls for a set time period. Eventually, you will become more and more comfortable. You can also practice your cold calls by leaving yourself two or three voicemails a day, Miller says. "The more you practice, the more confidence you'll get," he says.

**2. Tailor your greeting** based on the needs of your prospective customer, says Linda Arellano, owner of Customer Assurance LLC, a customer intelligence business in Bellevue, Nebraska.

Arellano started her business in 1996. She didn't have to do cold calling at first because she received so many referrals. But when the economy dried up, Arellano realized she had to start picking up the phone. She tailored her greeting to identify only those

people who needed and could afford her services so that she didn't waste time."

As a small business owner, it's important to prioritize what you do right now," she says. "I need to find out if they need or want my services. If they don't, then there's no point. The only way I can find out is by asking them."

**3. Lay the groundwork** before you call or drop by someone's office, says Harvey Saltzman, founder and president of Triangle Printers Inc. in Skokie, Illinois. Saltzman, who has been in business 48 years, uses promotional gimmicks to get acquainted.

His most recent is a three-part teaser: He first sends a postcard of a person holding a cup of coffee with the words, "Making your job refreshingly easier." Then, he sends a small package featuring a sleeping person and the words, "Have you received your wakeup call? Let us give you the scoop on how we can help." A coffee measuring scoop is included.

The last part of the teaser is a package printed with the words, "Wake Up" on the outside and "Your Creative Senses" on the inside. The box contains a quarter-pound of coffee.

"After we mail the package, we call and ask if they have received it," Saltzman says. "When they say yes, our salesman says, 'You have the coffee. I'd like to come in and bring the sweet rolls.'"

**4. Decrease tension and increase trust,** says Todd Duncan, founder and CEO of The Duncan Group, a La Jolla, California-based sales training company. "

Many people have a high level of sales call reluctance because they haven't spent time to clearly identify the value they will bring to the prospect," Duncan says. He notes that the most important task is to make the prospect comfortable. Do so by asking if you've reached the person at a convenient time. If he or she says "no," then ask for a better time to have a conversation. "This opens the door to make a cold call warm and a warm call hot," Duncan says.

You should also state the purpose of your call. "People should believe what they have to offer is worth the value of the sale," he says. He adds that the "value" should be articulated within the first 60 to 90 seconds.

"Include an element of social proof—other businesses that have used the service or product and what it has done for them," he says.

**5. When all else fails, email,** says Rob Frankel, a Los Angeles based-business consultant and author of *The Revenge of Brand X: How to Build a Big Time Brand on the Web or Anywhere Else*.

"I'd say that cold calling is just below putting a power drill onto my molars, and email is just like a breath of fresh air," Frankel says. "It can be a short thing, like, 'I saw an article about you, and if you're up for it, I think I can help you out. Keep me in your Rolodex.'"

He crafts personalized emails, written to reflect his personality, and sends them to 10 to 20 potential clients per day. His response rate is about 7%, he says.