

Sales tool

# Cold calling that works

by Brian Stahlhut Christiansen



#### About the solution

Milestone Selling is a sales management tool that facilitates sales and enables better sales management.

Read more on our website about sales processes, principles and effect.

[www.milestoneselling.com](http://www.milestoneselling.com)

#### About the author

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He is the author of the book "Accelerate Sales – Seven Golden Keys" and his weekly newsletter on sales strategies, tactics and methodologies has more than 5,000 readers.

## Cold calling that works

*The sower may mistake and sow his peas crookedly;  
the peas make no mistake, but come up and show his line.*

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Why don't I close more orders, a frustrated salesperson once asked me.

She believed that she presented her products positively and convincingly. She was certain that her motivation and perseverance were top notch, and she had as many meetings as her colleagues. Yet, her sales weren't satisfactory.

When I had asked her a few questions, I began to see the reason for the dissatisfactory sales results. She did everything the wrong way around. She knew all the closing techniques and regardless how much she struggled to close better, she didn't close enough deals.

She closed too fast and too hard. Her dissatisfactory sales were a natural consequence of her not using enough time and energy on qualifying leads, creating new contacts and familiarizing herself with the prospect's reality and unspoken needs.

You could say that she desperately tried to harvest a field where nothing had been sown. You can't do that, and you can't close more orders without building more sales opportunities and doing thorough, serious sales work first. I thought of Robert Louis Stevenson's famous observation: "Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant".

Let me try to describe the sales role from a different angle by drawing a parallel to an entirely different profession...

William Sutton robbed approximately 100 American banks from the late 1920s until his final arrest in 1952. Let yourself find inspiration in three famous points from the legendary bank robber's career...

*"Because that's where the money is."*

*William Sutton, infamous American bank robber explaining why he robbed banks*

I often meet salespeople who have not defined WHO their dream customers are. So ask yourself or discuss with your colleagues: Which industries and company sizes are most likely to be interested in the solution you are selling? In that perspective, who are the 25 most interesting leads to contact? In other words, to WHOM do you want to sell?

You can't make big heists in small shops and you can't sell big to small customers.

*"You can't rob a bank on charm and personality"*

*William Sutton explained in an interview.*

Now that you know to WHOM you want to sell, the next question is: HOW do you want to sell your services or solutions to the target group?

What is the most effective way to enter into dialogue with the prospect? What is the easiest way to get a meeting in the calendar? How do you increase the likelihood that the initial meeting leads to a request for quotation? What can you do to ensure that more offers turn into orders?

You can't rob banks with charm and personality — and you can't conduct professional selling armed with only a broad smile.

*"Go where the money is ... and go there often"*  
*From his memoirs (The Memoirs of a Bank Robber).*

Some salespeople know exactly WHO they want to sell to and HOW they want to do it. But they don't do it, they don't go for it, they don't act on their plan.

The third and last question you can take with you from the story about William Sutton is: HOW MANY telephone calls, meetings and offers are required in the short term to reach your goals in the long term?

Just knowing where the money is won't be enough; you have to act. Knowing your target group is not enough; it takes action.

Exploit your sales potential: Answer three questions: Who? How? How many?

I would like to give you a concrete tool for better cold calling.

*Line them up, and sign them up!*

Many salespeople — also good ones — hate calling prospects to book meetings. They have lots of excuses: They never have time, there are many other important tasks to do, their brochures aren't perfect, the cold call lists are no good, accounting needs their mileage report, etc.

But when I delve into the problem a bit further, it's always about something else. As I see it, there are two parties to any sales process: The salesperson and the prospect. I often ask salespeople who the call should be about and everyone answers, "The prospect".

Of course, we all agree on that. In theory.

But then, when I ask salespeople who they really make it all about, it's always themselves. Their inner dialogue is telling them for instance:

I don't want to be rejected

I don't want to be irritating

I don't want to be the laughing stock of my colleagues

I would rather check emails

I don't think the prospect needs our product

I...

If you want to book more meetings with prospective customers and find it difficult to get started, then begin by moving your focus and your inner dialogue from yourself to the prospect.

In other words, you have to see cold calling in a positive perspective...

*I have been up against tough competition all my life.  
I wouldn't know how to get along without it.*

*Walt Disney*

I have previously described how to use a sales letter to make your cold calling a bit easier, a bit more successful and (for those who fear cold calling) a bit less uncomfortable.

- But how do you feel about cold calling? Do you get nervous, do you blush and feel breathless every time you are about to call a prospect to book a meeting or sell something?

- In my experience, the fear of cold calling is often rooted in different perceptions of reality. When I have discussions with salespeople who have a hard time booking meetings, cold calling or cold canvassing in other ways, something dawns on them...
- Many salespeople (perhaps you too?) associate cold calling with words such as uncomfortable, unrewarding, and maybe even unfriendly. That makes it tiresome, demoralizing and boring. Hence, they cold call too little or not at all.
- If we ask your prospects how they perceive the call, they will have an entirely different perception. They will probably say that the conversation was unwanted, irritating or pushy.
- The difference between the two worldviews is the core of the problem; we perceive it in the wrong way and look at cold calling inappropriately. As I see cold calling — when done in the right way and with the right attitude — the picture is entirely different. Cold calling is actually:
- Professional work — you are calling to investigate if a dialogue is relevant
- Efficient and economical — you are calling to find out if a meeting makes sense (so no one wastes their time)
- Shared benefit — if the dialogue results in a cooperation, it is because you both benefit from it
- Interesting — what you offer may be interesting for the prospect but you don't know that yet
- Respectful — you recognize that the prospect may not have time right now, that you are calling about something that may be irrelevant, or that the prospect is having a bad day, just got fired, is stressed or that the company faces paramount challenges. In that case, you obviously end the call politely.

*Ability is what you're capable of doing.  
Motivation determines what you do.  
Attitude determines how well you do it.*

*Raymond Chandler*

One day, there was a knock on my door and outside were two people collecting money for the Red Cross Afghanistan collection. I know one of them a little, and he is not at all the proactive, door-kicking sales guy type — on the contrary.

But he was out with his donation box — out and about, knocking on strange people's doors and asking them for money. And many people did that. The collection was a big success, and not just because people want to support a good cause, but also because many had chosen to go door-to-door with the red donation box.

The strange thing is that many of those who collected donations probably would break into a cold sweat and get heart palpitations if they had to work with proactive direct sales. How can that be?

If we believe in our product or solution, why is it then that so many people have a hard time e.g. cold calling or door canvassing? If they believe they are selling high quality items that the prospects should consider, then why is that not a natural task just like anything else? If they see that their customers gain value from what they have bought, then why is it not the highlight of their day when they book their meetings?

In my experience, there are three typical reasons for that:

1. We think we are supposed to cold call and book meetings to pressure the customer lead to buy something they don't want, don't need, or shouldn't buy. But we are not, quite the contrary.

We should book meetings to make eye contact with the customer lead and investigate constructively if what we can deliver could be a good investment for the customer lead. It is not certain, but we can find out if we meet.

2. We think that it's us as persons who are rejected, when the customer lead says no thanks after 15 seconds of conversation. It's not. If you get a colleague to call 10 customer leads, who rejected you earlier that day, to ask them what your name was, none of them will likely remember. They are not rejecting you; they are rejecting being sold to at that specific point in time, because they are concentrating on something else.
3. We expect everyone to be positive and open to the good cause and conversely, we expect that everyone will be negative to something they don't know. But not everyone is. And if you make sure to quickly articulate, why your product may be able to add value for the prospects, then some of them will listen and be interested..

*In an age like ours, which is not given to letter-writing,  
we forget what an important part it used to play in people's lives*

*Anatole Broyard*

I am often asked if sales letters work. And each time, my answer is: They don't.

People are too busy to read a letter from someone they don't know, and they are bombarded with brochures, spam mails and newsletters every day. Furthermore, writing sales letters is also an escape from the greatest fear of many salespeople: Cold calling.

Having said that, a sales letter can still be a good idea if you redefine the purpose of sending it.

You will not get customers to call you, buy your product or attend a presentation because of a letter, no matter how well it is written or printed.

But it may increase your cold calling success rate in three ways:

1. If you feel safer calling after sending a letter, then send the letter so you get past your fear and make the call.
2. It may improve the prospect's disposition when you call — at least you have made the effort to send a letter first, some will think.
3. You can, if you follow my advice below, ensure that the prospect has thought along the lines and of the problems you would like to discuss at a possible meeting.

The headline should be short — one line at most — and it should be located where you see it immediately: In the middle of the top half of the page. The headline should be thought provoking and business oriented.

The pitch/elevator speech: How can you contribute and what does it mean to your customers? What do your customers achieve or avoid? Who are the customers?

Method or solution: Short description of the way in which you contribute to the success of your customers (concept/solution). What sets you apart, in what way you are special. Make it general and use the words your readers normally use.

Indicate opportunities by explaining that the recipients may also achieve the same advantages or opportunities but underplay this, don't promise or guarantee anything, just point out the possibility.

Next step: State your intention (you want to start a dialogue, investigate the possibilities of a collaboration, or simply: you want a meeting) and then explain clearly what you will do now. If you are planning to follow up by telephone, then say so. Don't be too specific about the time, just mention that you will call one of the next few days.

Finish the letter traditionally, not too showy, avoid fancy endings. "Yours sincerely" is still best. Write your contact information in the letter instead of attaching a business card (you hand that over after the meeting if you get one).

Your letter is now ready. Before you send it I want to give you some more advice:

- If you want to send out many letters, you should consider sending a few at a time. Maybe 5 to 10 per day so you have time to follow up on each of them before the recipients forget the letter.
- With a letter as described above, you will at least be able to refer to it when calling the prospect. But do it right: Never ask, "Did you receive my letter?" for you will often get the reply, "No" (the prospect may not remember the letter the second you call).
- Instead, use it as a premise: "I sent you a letter in which I briefly describe our way to ... (the value of your solutions), and as you may have seen, we work with for instance ... (reference customers)." The prospect may now mention having seen the letter, if he or she remembers it. And if the prospect doesn't say anything, you just ignore it and continue the cold calling conversation.
- Sometimes, a prospect will have asked a secretary to set up a meeting with you when you call (if the letter hits a nerve). So mention the letter briefly when talking to the contact's colleagues. Maybe you don't even need to talk to the recipient to get a meeting in your calendar.

*Enthusiasm is the greatest asset in the world.  
It beats money and power and influence.  
It is no more or less than faith in action.*

*Henry Chester*

I still laugh at Jerry Seinfeld's humor and I think we salespeople can learn something from him. For we often have unrealistic expectations to the way it is received when we cold call.

An episode of Seinfeld sees Jerry in his apartment talking to his friends when the telephone rings and this dialogue comes to pass...

(Telephone rings)

Telemarketer: "Hi, would you be interested in switching over to TMI long distance service?"

Jerry: "Oh gee, I can't talk right now. Why don't you give me your home number and I'll call you later."

Telemarketer: "Uh, I'm sorry, we're not allowed to do that".

Jerry: "Oh, I guess you don't want people calling you at home."

Telemarketer: "No".

Jerry: "Well, now you know how I feel". (hangs up)

Once I was done laughing, I thought about how disappointed we salespeople are when we get a no over the phone. But only we are accountable for our bad mood. The vast majority of prospects are

working on other, more important tasks (they think) than talking to you when you call. In other words; not many people are just sitting there, hoping that a telemarketer will call them.

And that is typically what happens. Salespeople resist cold calling out of fear of personal failure. But that is not what cold calling is about. They succeeded in moving their focus from own success/failure to the prospect's possibilities and challenges, and once that shift had happened, cold calling wasn't as dangerous anymore. You have to cut a lot of worthless chunks from a rock before you find a gold nugget.

*Advertising is, actually, a simple phenomenon in terms of economics. It is merely a substitute for a personal sales force — an extension, if you will, of the merchant who cries aloud his wares.*

*Rosser Reeves, Reality in Advertising, 1986.*

Cold calling varies a lot between sales departments. One reason is that they are not managed as professional campaigns as much as "something you do a bit when you have time and feel like it".

In her blog, Josiane Feigon has some concrete suggestions for what to do about it...

1. Stop trusting the marketing department to generate leads. They have more than enough to do looking after the website and brochures. If you want leads, you have to generate them yourself.
2. Draft a quality list of prospects with a high chance of success. Start by finding your customers' competitors, for instance. Use business databases, Google them, use LinkedIn, etc.
3. What is your message? Do you want to sell a product, book a meeting, get signups for a seminar, or what is your concrete goal?
4. Email templates. Make a handful of relevant email templates (meeting confirmation, dialogue follow-up, invitation to after-hours meeting, etc.) and make sure you include a link to your website and clear messages about your product value in all mails.
5. Take control of the email marketing system. Build up your own mailing list, either in your CRM system or in e.g. Constant Contact.
6. Allocate time for cold calling and let no one disturb you.
7. Drop contacts with no decision-making power or influence. Recognize early on if you are wasting your time on a contact that is placed at too low a level in the organization.
8. Make a plan for when to follow up, how much time may elapse after each activity in your own marketing machine, and follow up on the plan.

*Take a chance! All life is a chance.  
The man who goes farthest is generally  
the one who is willing to do and dare.*

*Dale Carnegie*

When I train salespeople in appointment setting, cold calling, there is often a great deal of resistance to the task. Many salespeople can do it but won't. When I ask them why booking meetings is a "don't like task" I often get answers such as:

- I don't want to be turned down or rejected
- I don't want to sound stupid

- I don't want to sacrifice my integrity
- I don't want to spoil my day
- I don't want to be irritating
- I don't want to be the laughing stock of my colleagues
- I would rather check emails

I recently asked a sales team, where the focus should be in a cold calling conversation. They all agreed that the focus should be on the prospect's challenges and possibilities with the product they sold. But on second thought they realized that deep down, they were focusing on themselves and their sales objectives when they were cold calling.

*Art is making something out of nothing and selling it.*

*Frank Zappa*

How do you get access to someone at the highest level of a big organization?

It can be a long and tough struggle to make contact with the real decision-maker, and many salespeople finally give up after telephone calls, messages, emails and letters. It is a long and frustrating process.

To expedite the process and increase your chances of success, you should change your focus from one target to many, proposes Michael Boylan, Accelerant International.

The basic strategy is relatively simple. Instead of sending an email or calling a contact, you "broadcast" value-laden statements about your product or service via letter, email or fax to several carefully selected high-ranking people in the same organization at the same time. Every time, you summarize the value and ask the recipient to lead you to the right person. You can also let them know who else has received the letter.

That strategy works better than the traditional one, says Boylan, because it generates an internal debate about your proposition. A recipient can't just throw away your letter if he knows others have received the same thing. In that way you generate more discussion, debate and sometimes disagreement among the people you have targeted, says Boylan.

The key to the system is your ability to articulate value. You must be able to show real value, not generic marketing hype and buzzwords, if you want to pique the interest of the executives you are targeting. Only by clearly communicating the value of your product in a thought-provoking way will you generate interest and discussion and eventually make contact to the right person.

*Most people who fail in their dreams fail  
not from lack of ability but from lack of commitment.*

*Zig Ziglar, motivational speaker*

American studies indicate that on average, nine attempts are needed to make contact with a director or other important decision-maker over the phone, but...

- 48% give up after the first attempt, and the next
- 28% give up after the second attempt, and taking into account that
- 7% more give up after the third attempt, and
- 5% more give up after the fourth tempt, and
- 4% more give up after the fifth attempt, then more than
- 92% give up without making contact with the decision-maker.

So what can you do to help your salespeople make contact to the decision-makers at your prospects faster, easier and more effectively? Here are some suggestions:

- Send an introductory letter, a formal letter on proper paper and without too many brochures. Politely state who you are and what you would like to talk about on the telephone.
- Investigate via LinkedIn if you happen to have mutual acquaintances. LinkedIn has made the world smaller and it can be extremely effective. You could for instance ask the mutual acquaintance if he or she would 'open the door' for your salesperson, or you could ask for permission to use their name.
- Make your message so interesting and credible that the decision-maker's assistant wants to help you with information on when to call again.
- As a rule, do not leave a message. The decision-maker will not call you back anyway and if it should happen, you probably wouldn't be able to remember who 'John Smith' or 'Paul Jones' is on the long list of prospects. But if you have called a great number of times, you could leave a message as a last resort anyway. If so:
- Be prepared and have written down in advance what you want to say, if you do choose to leave a message on voicemail.
- Consider if there are any industry-related trade shows, networking events or similar that the decision-maker will participate in. If you are up to it, you can perhaps introduce yourself, hand over a business card and ask for permission to make contact again.

I often see field salespeople give up on cold calling. They lose patience with customers who can't make a decision, are difficult to reach, won't talk to them, etc.

But maybe sometimes, salespeople can't see all the possibilities. Are you one of them? Cold calling is hard but also effective. Consider if you could benefit from making one or more of these improvements:

*Early to bed, early to rise.  
Work like hell — and advertise!  
Coca Cola Company*

Many salespeople would have greater success with their efforts if they followed these simple guidelines:

Throw away 20% of your customer prospects and exchange them for new ones, and do it again after a while. Call lists often get worn out, so that they only feature the prospects who are never in the office, never have time, or who are always busy with something else. Throw them away and use your time better.

Think in campaigns. Attack an industry or town with specific products or product groups. Make a campaign plan so you know which industries or areas you need to work through week by week.

Make a deal with one or more colleagues, maybe a quick competition. Cold calling on your own is hard work. The work is easier if one (or all) of your colleagues do it with you. Count the number of calls and meetings booked and share successes and experiences.

Don't let anything or anyone disturb you when you are making money. When you are cold calling, there is only one priority, and your colleagues must understand that cold calling is as important as meetings. They must not disturb you; they have to wait.

Start early in the day. What time did you start your cold calling today? How about yesterday? Start early, reach your target and spend the rest of the day on other important tasks and projects. Otherwise, cold calling gets postponed from morning to afternoon, from Monday to Tuesday, from one week to the next, etc. You always have your mileage or expense reports to spend your time on, and they are often more fun than cold calling.

Figure out a good opening, a door opener that motivates the prospect for positive dialogue rather than rejection. A good template is:

- Who you are
- Where you are calling from (company name)
- What you sell (put very simply)
- How other customers benefit from your products or services
- An open question that guides the prospect towards positive dialogue

*A mediocre idea that generates enthusiasm will go further than a great idea that inspires no one.*

*Mary Kay Ash*

Let me briefly focus on point 6 above — the opening. Many salespeople unfortunately use an opening that closes the conversation immediately again. Many of them ask about trivia, for instance:

“How are you?” (and maybe get the reply: None of your business), or

“Have you heard of us?” (what will you say if the prospect says no?).

A good cold call opening has three elements:

1. Introduce yourself: What is your name and what is the company's name.
2. Go straight for the kill. You could say:
  - I would like to show you how we can reduce your transportation costs.
  - I am working to make it possible for you to make more money on your service agreements. Could we have a talk about that?
  - I am calling because we may be able to optimize your stock management and minimize your inventory levels.
  - I have read about your company and want to investigate how we can improve your employee satisfaction.
3. Build trust to substantiate the gain:
  - We have done that for other companies in your industry.
  - I can tell you that company Smith & Jones saved more than that.

- For your information, Davis & Brown increased their profit on service agreements by 20% because of our service.
- Thomas & Moore improved employee satisfaction significantly and halved their staff turnover rate.

You can find a template for your own cold calling script at the end of this book.

But the above advice is not enough. Without belief in yourself and your product, you will not be successful at work. Let me give you an example of the importance of believing.

*The customer is God*  
*Japanese proverb*

Our doorbell rang one Wednesday, and outside stood two people; a shy young man who was looking at the floor, and a young woman who held a red book in her hand and stared at me with the eyes of a deer caught in the headlights. I was wondering if I really looked that bad, but I soon received an explanation.

"Eh, hi, yes, um, we are here because we have some good news for you..." she started, while his shy gaze never left our floor. She saw me looking at the red book before I said, "Thanks, but no thanks."

So that was the pitch from Jehova's Witnesses. "We have some good news for you". Apparently even Jehova's Witnesses study sales techniques before they go into the field, and that is probably a good idea.

While politely declining a couple of times, I studied the two hopeful bearers of good news. I could almost imagine how they had discussed if they dared ring the bell. They were probably equally nervous and scared of yet another rejection. Yes, afraid of rejection like so many salespeople. But she fought more than he, she believed more in her product than he did, and she was determined to tell me about her product for my sake. You could say, her belief was stronger than her fear.

How much do you believe in your product? Are you so determined to fight to reach your goals that you do things that deep down scare you? Do you believe so much in your message that you keep fighting, not for your sake but for the customers'?

*Continuous effort — not strength or intelligence —  
is the key to unlocking our potential.*  
*Sir Winston Churchill*

Frances Lindsay is a middle-aged woman who had set herself a target: To complete a marathon.

She had never run that far before and, to put it mildly, she didn't look like a long distance runner when the race was launched in New York.

But when she crossed the finishing line after 8 hours, 28 minutes and 46 seconds, she was exactly that, a long distance runner. Maybe the greatest of them all.

The official roster is closed after 8 hours and 30 minutes, and thus Frances Lindsay officially finished last; yet she received an award: The 'I stuck it out' award.

She was rewarded for completion in spite of finishing in last place. She earned an award for giving everything she had in her, and she was lauded for walking the whole way.

In that way, she was the symbol of genuine and pure character, and her character created her destiny. It works the same way for the rest of us and our businesses. Our characters create our destinies.

Who do you reward today, and who should be given the 'I stuck it out' award tomorrow? Cold calling is hard work, and that is why it is particularly important that you reward effort and perseverance and not just results.

Let me give you another example of perseverance that ultimately led to success...

*Warriors take chances. Like everyone else, they fear failing,  
but they refuse to let fear control them.*

*Samurai proverb*

A young, hopeful author had written his first book and sent it to a publishing company, which returned it with harsh criticism.

He wrote another book and sent it to another publishing company, and the same thing happened: The book was returned with severe criticism.

He wrote another book and sent it to a third publishing company. History repeated itself.

He started working as a teacher but he didn't stop writing books, which he sent to different publishers. Each time with the same result. Until one day, when he suddenly received a cheque for 400,000 dollars.

Somewhat confused, he called the publisher and humbly asked if it wasn't a mistake, if the cheque was not supposed to be for 400 dollars. But it was no mistake, and the cheque was only an advance on the expected copyright fee for his book. The author's name is Stephen King and it is a true story.

What would you have done if it had been you? The best salespeople possess indomitable optimism and find motivation in adversity. That is necessary, unless you are selling something everyone wants and are the only one doing it.

And no, making mistakes isn't wrong — making the same mistakes twice is wrong. If whatever you did yesterday didn't work, then try something else. If that doesn't work either, then try something else. You are not paid to work hard — you are paid a bonus to generate results, and you only do that when it goes well. So try again, in a new way — and keep going.

When things are at their hardest, try to measure how much you call instead of how many meetings you book.

*Everyone has a plan until they get hit*

*Mike Tyson*

Most salespeople's working day is practically chaotic. They may have planned a number of tasks they want to do, but already before 9 am, the plan goes off the rails: A big customer calls with a problem, there are emails with technical and complicated questions, a meeting drags on, and suddenly the plan is ruined.

There is a simple solution, says John Klymshyn, the author of "How to Sell".

"The 20-call burst" is what it takes. Meaning, the salesperson sits down and makes 20 calls twice or three times per day. Those are the time slots when you make calls, and you need to do it constantly, with no pauses between calls, until you have called 20 people. Does it sound easy? In

theory, it is. In practice, it takes lots of self-discipline to do it right. Think of the three central elements:

**Twenty calls.** Sit down and list 20 people you want to talk to right now. That includes everyone — follow-up on last week's trade fair, a customer who wanted information, cold calls, etc. Organize the list so that the five to eight calls in the middle are cold calls. Now you have the names for your first "20-call burst". Why 20? Because if you do less than that, you won't make enough progress; more than that and you get bored, Klymshyn says. Remember, he adds, that your goal isn't 20 conversations, it is 20 calls. Make one call after the other, until you reach 20. Then you are done until next round later that day.

**Uninterrupted.** This is the hard part for most people. Klymshyn insists that you commit to making your calls without any distractions. That means no emails, no incoming calls, no stopping to answer a colleague's question, no internet surfing. Hang a sign on your door or put a flag on your desk and turn off your mobile phone — do what you need to do to avoid getting interrupted during your 20-call burst. Do nothing else during the 45 to 90 minutes it will take to make your 20 calls.

**Twice or three times per day.** Was there a prospect you didn't reach? Call again during the next 20-call burst, says Klymshyn. Most would normally call back during the day, but stick to the structure for the sake of it. And by sticking to this structure, you will end up making more calls in the day, which in turn will bring better results over time. Klymshyn recommends that you make your first 20 calls as soon as you arrive at the office, the next before you have lunch, and the last just before you leave. After the last 20 calls, make a list of the 20 people you want to call the next morning.

*Chop your own wood and it will warm you twice.*

*Henry Ford*

One of the best ways to increase your sales efficiency is to qualify and hence also disqualify your customer prospects better and more precisely. In other words; find out if the prospect is worth your time before you invest the most precious thing you have: Your time.

That can be done in many ways, and even though it seemed crazy at the time, I must admit today that Chris had understood the value of qualifying his prospects. Chris worked at an investment brokerage and as I was standing there between lots of young men in expensive suits, he sharply distinguished himself from all his colleagues.

He was performing the same task as his colleagues in the room (cold calling business owners and persuading them to invest in different projects) — but they were behaving very differently.

He was standing — they were seated.

He never let go of the telephone handset but called the next person on his list if he didn't get hold of the first one.

He spoke quickly, moved quickly and thought quickly. His colleagues were mostly sitting there, hoping the phone would ring by itself.

The difference was palpable. But the truly interesting part was his opening line in the insane amount of cold calls he made in high spirits, hour by hour, day by day.

"Haben Sie ein Million frei?"

He was cold calling German business owners and spoke German with a distinct Danish accent. He was turned down, again and again and again. And I was curious, so I asked him why he had chosen that tactic.

“It’s quite simple” he said and elaborated: “My colleagues are spending much too much of their time on the small investments of small customers. We are using the same sales process, the same brochures and the same sales arguments. And we need to use the same number of meetings to persuade a prospect to make the investment we recommend. So I have decided to only spend my time on prospects that have at least one million Euros in available funds. If they don’t it is not worth my time spending my selling time on them.”

And you know what? Even though it seemed extreme and would have benefited from more polite wording, I couldn’t resist smiling and nodding appreciatively. Chris had it right.

*You learn in life that the only person you can really correct and change is yourself.*

*Katharine Hepburn*

When discussing self-motivation a lot of fine theories always emerge. It is about finding meaning in life, being clear about one’s values, setting goals and being with inspiring people. The most important part, however, is right at our feet: Using the body to get in the right mood. Try this:

Straighten up, pull your shoulders back and push your chest forward. Inhale deeply through your nose, look up and hold the breath for 10 seconds.

I guarantee that it felt good when you did these simple things. You used your body to create a good, resourceful frame of mind.

I was coaching a salesperson in telephone selling. She wasn’t happy about calling and so, she balked at it. I noticed the following:

She started by leaning in over the desk. She looked down at the screen, her shoulders came forward and her chest fell backwards. If you do the same, you will also notice that your frame of mind changes very negatively.

Just by changing her physical stance, she found it a lot easier to pick up the handset and talk to her customers.

It is simple but it works. It is so simple that it always gets ridiculed by people who haven’t tried it. Be brave and try it. Control your own posture so that it brings out the best in you — always.

*Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best.*

*Henry Van Dyke*

A combination alternative to telemarketing could be intelligent email usage. I always recommend the telephone over emails but there may be situations where the phone doesn’t work for you. If you have tried unsuccessfully numerous times, if the secretary simply will not put you through, etc.

Here are some suggestions for how to use emails to book meetings:

- Personalize every mail. Decision-makers have to know right away that the email was written only for them. Mention your research or other supporting data. Highlight a triggering event and use a reference.
- Equate your message to their business needs. Don’t write about your company, products, services or solutions. Nada! Not a word. Focus instead on their questions, worries, problems and challenges.

- Keep it brief and interesting. You have less than 20 seconds to capture the recipients' attention. After the first few sentences they decide if they want to delete, forward or react to the email.
- Make your message readable from the preview window. Most people see a quick scan of their emails in a preview window before opening them. If your message is longer than that, then shorten it.
- Start a conversation. Your goal is to involve decision-makers in an online discussion. To do this, you have to give them something they can react to. Ask a question, invite them to a webinar, see if they would be interested in more information on your website. Focus on establishing a dialogue.
- Be aware of any legal constraints when using emails. The prospect may have to give you permission to contact him or her via email.

If it ain't broken, don't fix it.

Many salespeople are tired of being rejected when cold calling.

There may be many reasons why the prospect isn't interested — but often, it will be because the prospect doesn't feel they have an urgent problem or a challenge they have to do something about.

There may be many reasons for a prospect not to perceive an urgent problem:

- There may be other, more important challenges to deal with
- They have learned to live with the problem (that's how it has always been)
- They have accepted the inconvenience (maybe because they believe it will be too expensive to change)

In that situation, the reaction to your call will always be, "We are not interested". That doesn't mean they should not buy what you are selling. But they aren't ready — yet.

So what do you do then?

1. Verbalize the key problems and challenges addressed by your solution
2. Ask questions that force the prospect to consider if the things you are talking about apply to the prospects' reality
3. Hope it gets the prospect to stop and reflect long enough for you to start a real dialogue or agree a meeting.

And when/if Plan A doesn't work:

1. Accept that a lot of wasted effort is normal in the initial phases of a sales process.
2. ... so plan and expect a lot of failed attempts — every week.
3. Have a Plan B, C and D ready, for instance:
  - a. Have some material you can send and follow up on
  - b. Offer to sign up the prospect for a newsletter
  - c. Agree to have another dialogue when you have something new to tell or an arrangement you want to invite the prospect to
  - d. Follow the new plan (use your sales management tool).

In that way, you get something constructive out of the many rejections, which actually aren't a reflection of an irrelevant offering but only of bad timing.

Below, you will find a template with which you can make your own effective cold calling script based on the information above.

Note/objective	What you say
<p>Past the secretary</p> <p>If you don't have the contact's name, consider calling the secretary just to get name, telephone and email, and then call again a few days later.</p> <p>Be prepared for a certain level of resistance from the gatekeeper.</p>	<p>Hello, my name is &lt;Name&gt; and I am calling from &lt;Company name&gt;.</p> <p>I would like to speak to &lt;name or alternatively title&gt;.</p> <p><i>"I am afraid he is not available"</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Then I will try to call again in a little while, may I ask who to contact?</li> <li>• Does he/she have a direct number or maybe an email address I can use?</li> <li>• When do you think it will be best?</li> </ul> <p><i>"What is it about?"</i></p> <p>We are going to discuss a cooperation.</p>
<p>Who are you and where are you calling from?</p> <p>The value you offer to customers...</p> <p>Who have you done it for? References</p>	<p>Hello, this is &lt;Name&gt; from &lt;Company name&gt;.</p> <p>We ... &lt;your mission&gt;.</p> <p>We work with for instance &lt;2-3 relevant references&gt;.</p>
<p>Why are you calling?</p>	<p>I am calling to find out if we may be able to generate value for you.</p> <p>I am calling to interest you in discussing our potential collaboration</p> <p>I am contacting you to tell you in brief about our new method.</p>
<p>Time?</p> <p>Get permission to continue</p>	<p>Do you have 2 minutes?/Do you have a moment?</p> <p>"Yes, that's fine".</p> <p>&lt;you continue&gt;</p> <p><i>"No, it's actually not a good moment right now..."</i></p> <p>When would it suit you?</p> <p><i>"We are not interested".</i></p> <p>I see. We have a newsletter I would like to sign you up for.</p>

You have been given some time. Repeat what it is you can do for them.	<Company name> <repeat mission verbatim as before> and the question is if our concept could be relevant for you <pause — let your message sink in>.
Get specific, go for a meeting.	And I would like to present it to you so together, we can work out if we can help each other.
Give options.	That could be at a meeting at your office <propose a date when you are in that area anyway>, or we could have a brief telephone and web meeting about the possibilities. It will initially just take 30 minutes.
Set a timeframe.	
Open question so the prospect can't just say "no".	How does that sound? What do you say to that? What would you prefer?
Agree next step.	<i>"That sounds OK" or "We can do that".</i> <Get the details time and place, down and agree for you to send meeting confirmation>.
Handle objection.	<i>"I don't think it is for us" or "We are not interested".</i> Maybe you are right and I don't want to waste neither your nor my time. May I ask if you use <our type of product> today?
Force a clear answer.	<i>"Send some material"</i> I will be happy to do that — is there anything in particular you would like information on?