



Would You Like a Latte?



Cold calling is a prickly pear. When I talk about the virtues of not cold-calling I encounter raised eyebrows and loud rumblings to the effect of “what planet are you from?” So let me shed some further light on this thorny debate.

I’ve been around sales long enough to thoroughly grasp that it’s necessary to look for business beyond the clients you already have; in fact you’re going to have to interrupt a few prospects just to get their attention.

“So how do I find new business if I don’t cold call?” you ask.

Consider you could spend most of your time chasing what you believe to be solid prospects only to find out that you are no closer to a sale than Gerry Garcia is to making an appearance at the next Grateful Dead concert.

Often a sales representative is given a list of warm leads and instructed to “go get ‘em”.

If you’re new you’ll get the “D” list.

As a prerequisite of holding on to your position at International Widget Inc., it would be in your best interest to humour the boss. Or, if you’re just starting out running your own business you’ll need to resign yourself to some initial bootstrapping. It’s part of doing business.

If you consider that every time you knock on the cold lead’s door there’s been umpteen vendors ahead of you all wanting to sell them something; then there’s a good chance you’ll get the “knee-jerk no” or “we’re satisfied with our current supplier”. (Translates: we’re miserably comfortable with them; give us three good reasons to switch.)

The one exception may be if you happen to stumble onto a client that is so desperately in need of your widget or service they’ll be falling all over you like lunch on a cheap paper plate.

Creating the “will to buy”® is the best way to sell, but if your position hinges on making cold calls or if you’re just starting a business then you’ve got some grunt work ahead;

Here are some things that work.

First and foremost make sure you’ve qualified (researched) any leads to be certain that you’re not wasting precious time. (If you’re a serious sales pro or wanna be and your goal is to earn \$100,000. this year every hour you spend chasing a prospect costs you \$48.)

Accept that your challenge is to get to those primed groups (segments) that are most likely to buy your product or service. It must be the right fit, they must have a need and you must be prepared to tell a convincing story.

Let me emphasize, if you’re going to be judged by how many calls you make rather than the quality calls you complete, you’re in for a bumpy ride. I don’t believe playing only the numbers game is winnable long term. It can be a crap shoot. You’re betting against your ability to form long term client relationships; Ones that you will be able to nurture and get referrals from over time. (One solid referral can turn into tens of thousands of dollars in future business.)

That said, if the call has promise, be sure you know going in who you need to talk to. That would translate: the decision maker, the cheque writer, the kahuna, boss or daddy.

If you don’t know? Some gatekeeper or middle manager will take great satisfaction in blowing you off. With that in mind if you have an aversion to homework or an opportunity comes out of the woodwork without notice try this.

Open with; “I need your help. I’m Julie and I’d need to leave some important information on transferring files and documents to CDs. Who should I leave if for (or direct it to)?

Should you get lucky and they give you a name double check with this little follow-up.

“Is he/she the person who usually decides on these kinds of matters or is there somebody else that helps with these decisions?”

With this approach you can expect any number of responses. Maybe you’ll get lucky. Creating the “will to buy”® takes practice. It’s like any other skill that requires finesse. Gretzky didn’t become the Great One overnight.

That said, (and I saved the best to last) if you want to be welcomed with open arms, find out who the decision makers are, or anything about the company and get offered a latte? (Make mine a skinny double mint mocha latté and park it)

Ask to speak with the company sales rep. They’ll tell you anything. Think about it, their job is to talk about the company and nurture prospects. Who knows more than they do? Think smart, talk to the sales rep forget the gatekeeper.