

Calisthenics for Cold Calls

By Judith Filek—President
Impact Communications, Inc.

Is there anyone that likes to make cold calls? Most of us hate them. Since they are unsolicited, often recipients find them annoying and do not respond to them. While challenging, you can increase your odds for success with strong preparation

At all costs, avoid making random calls to people you don't know. Try to "warm up" a cold call by selecting names from special interest lists you have purchased. Most company's have their own data systems that can provide leads. Then, do your homework. Peruse the target's own web site. Read analyst reports or news articles. If they are a publicly held company, review their annual report. In addition, consider using Factiva or Hoovers or any other Internet subscription series as a means of ascertaining the company's key initiatives. Then, think about how your product or service might help.

It is a mistake to "wing" a cold call. Before placing the call, determine your goal and your strategy. Consider preparing an outline on your target's potential issues and the selling points you want to mention. Create a compelling value proposition to open your call. Review fact sheets or merchandising sheets to understand features and benefits of the product or service you are promoting. Then, stick to your goal. Do not try to introduce your entire product line or oversell. Remember the customer is only interested in solving immediate issues.

If the product you are selling is costly or complicated, educating your customer is important. Be sure you can clearly describe how the product works. Practice describing it to a young child. If you can describe your product or service so that a six year old child understands, your target will most definitely understand it also. Analogies and examples will shortcut the education process.

Obviously, there will be questions. Questions are actually a good sign. If you have brainstormed the questions you will be asked ahead of time, you will be ready. If this is a product you don't know well, con-

sult the product specialist for the answers. Keep a list of the typical questions and their answers handy. Make sure you link all of your answers to the key issue the customer is trying to solve. Avoid talking about price until all the questions about features and benefits have been answered.

Cold calls are a part of any sales person's life. Knowing how to tackle them effectively is critical for anyone trying to sell an idea or product over the phone.

Question: *We're interested in your reaction to this article. Click here – to comment on this article, share your concerns or ask questions. Judy will respond to all questions.*

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. It is not what you know but how you communicate it that makes a difference. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our website, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.