

Generating Interest When Cold Calling

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The last thing your customers want to do is take an unsolicited phone call. They are very busy people who have a million problems to solve before the day is done. Their automatic assumption is cold calls waste time. By generating interest immediately, you can transform your customers into interested listeners. Your days of getting the “bum’s rush” will be over. So what are the things you should do?

First, do your homework. What this means is that before you pick up the phone, you should study the customer’s business. For example, if the company is a publicly-held corporation, go to its web site and review the annual report. Notice how the CEO is compensated. That is a good tip-off as to what the company’s priorities will be for the year. Also, look at any recent newspaper articles and read what the analysts say about the company. You will glean much valuable insight. If the company is privately-held, check out on-line sources, such as Hoover’s, for information. If you know anyone in the company, make sure you call the person to see what else you can uncover.

Once you feel you have identified some possible hot buttons or pain points, you are still not ready to dial. You need to think in terms of what value your call can bring to the customer. The mistake that many salespeople make is to think in terms of the features of their product versus how the product

might solve the person’s headaches. You can create value points for the customer by sharing something you have just read, for example, a new idea or some interesting results people in similar companies have been getting due to your product or service.

After you have written down your value points, you may want to rehearse them out loud to see if they sound like something your customer might consider. You should also consider whether you sound conversational. People immediately sense if you are reading to them. Once you have done this, then you are ready to place your call.

Open your call by identifying your self and your organization and then jump right into what you think might be of interest to this particular customer and why. Do not talk about what your company does because the customer will disconnect as quickly as possible. Remember, your goal in a cold call should be to keep the customer feeling positive about you and what you are saying and to keep the person involved. It is not to sell. By keeping the right perspective in mind, the customer will start to see you in a consultative role instead of a sales role.

While you want to get the customer involved, you cannot hammer the person with specific questions about their business too quickly. It is better to ask agreement questions or “yes or no” questions first. Once the customer seems hooked, then it is appropriate to verify if your assumptions about their business problems are correct. If the information you have been sharing is of value to them, the customer will begin to talk about some of his/ her issues. The person will also start to ask you some questions. Once this starts to happen, it is appropriate to ask for an appointment or to set another time to talk further.

Cold calls do not have to end badly. With proper planning and a good understanding of your customer’s business and your own goal, you can generate interest and actually make the customer happy that he or she picked up the phone.

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