

Need to make your cold calls warmer and more effective?

HAVE noticed that, time and time again, the issue of getting new work comes up in discussions amongst independent consultants. Some are lucky to get all their work from referrals, or just contracts that are simply renewed, but relying on these sources alone can make us victims of the feast and famine cycle.

So, how can we maintain a regular pipeline of leads, or interest in our work, even though we often hate the thought of cold calling or drumming up new business?

What may stop us doing this is not 'feeling comfortable' in approaching people or companies 'cold'. So how can we feel better about carrying out this critical business task?



The first issue here is consistency. New business development activity must be done regularly, even if it is only half an hour or so a day. The second issue is to do with making our approach less 'cold' and, in doing this, making ourselves feel more comfortable about these initial approaches.

In order to make new business contacts, it is important to understand how people engage, or establish rapport, with one another. I often use an analogy of two strangers at a party. Rapport will be established more effectively and rapidly if each stranger takes an interest in the other person, rather than talking about themselves. I find the same is true in a business context. Companies, or indeed individuals, often make the mistake of delivering a pitch on their product or service during their initial approach. The net effect is to leave the person on the receiving end of this very cold.

Therefore, it makes a considerable difference if time is taken to carry out some research on the company or person you are calling before you pick up the phone. Then, your initial opening line should be about them and their business, and not your service offering. It makes an even bigger difference if, in some way, you can make a connection between their current business climate and some success you have had in a similar environment.

If you run through this process in your mind you will begin to see, hear and get a sense of a much more comfortable approach. The person who is being 'cold called' is likely to be more responsive because you have clearly taken the time to do your homework. Consequently, you can feel more comfortable. More importantly, having done your background research, you will have a better idea of whether the approach is likely to bring you business.

Need to feel warmer still?

Call the PA of the Chairman of the company you want to approach. Find out the name of the Executive Director who is responsible for the part of the business you want to sell into. Then, when you are introducing yourself at the beginning of your call, you can refer to the conversation with their Chairman's PA. Hierarchy plays a big part in organisations and you will probably find they will at least give you the time of day!

How do you know whether you are doing all this right?

Check out your process and delivery

using a telephone recorder*. You may not be aware that, for every telephone conversation, the impact of the call is based on the delivery being five times as important as the content. So how well are you engaging with your prospects once you get hold of them? Do you need to modify your communication style to get better rapport with people who have very different styles from your own? Do you need to speed up your voice, slow it down, inject more energy, or increase the volume? Try making these adjustments and notice what a considerable difference it can make in building rapport.

So now you have a process to make you feel at least a little better about making those new business contacts. After all, if you follow through my points you have:

- A valid business reason for contacting your target company
- A referral or confirmation from the Chairman's PA that the person you are contacting has overall responsibility for the area of the business you want to sell into
- A way of monitoring the success of your calls

With this process, new business development, or cold calling, will be less daunting. After all, you know that your target executive or company should be interested in what you have to offer and, above all, if you do win the business, you can be confident in doing a good job as you have already done your ground work.

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clients. He is also a Master Practitioner of NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), and uses a number of high level communication techniques. More about his work can be found at: www.teleopen.com David can be contacted at tel: 01923 663 275 or email: info@telopen.com

* When you record calls ensure that you comply with the Ofcom regulations regarding the monitoring and recording of calls