

## BELIEVE WHAT YOU WANT; BUT YOU MUST STILL COLD CALL

By BOB HOWARD

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Many of you, like me, are purists when it comes to cold calling. To purists, the only definition of cold calling is picking up the telephone to *'call someone who does not know you'* to ask for an appointment (or ask for an order.) Therefore, I find amusement, chagrin and some sadness in the articles and blogs proclaiming *'only idiots cold call,' 'social media eliminates cold calling,' 'all you need is referrals,'* or *'cold calling is dead.'*

All of these articles mislead new sales professionals into believing they don't have to cold call because there are better alternatives to getting those Initial Appointments – those alternatives being marketing and research. Let's explore them.

First, the marketing camp. Some author offer tips on how to use the Internet (social media, email marketing, networking) to create interest in your solution. The targets still don't know you, but they will respond to your messaging. They raise their hand and volunteer to speak with you. This is marketing advice, not selling advice. If this was all it took to succeed, then you would only need marketing departments and order takers. This advice is like a *'cooking made easy'* class providing directions to the nearest soup kitchen - well, it's easier than cooking, right? The beauty of cold calling is that you have your fate at your own fingertips – proactively dialing the phone. This marketing advice is telling you to take another puff of *'hopium'* and kick back to wait for them to come to you.

Next, the research camp. Other authors re-define cold calling as *'call someone who does not know you – but you know something about them.'* Knowing a lot about the target is good, but it is still cold calling – the target still has no clue who you are. I wholeheartedly agree that knowing something about the target is good. Knowing something allows you to leave voicemails and emails that more strongly resonates than does generic messaging. This approach is expensive (time and effort,) but one cannot deny the logic.

Neither of these pieces of advice is inherently bad – but neither is a short cut to, nor eliminates the need for, cold calling. I am chagrined and saddened because there are readers who think these are legitimate, can't miss, actual shortcuts. To make the time to pursue these marketing and research approaches, sales professionals reduce (or in some cases eliminate) their current cold calling efforts in the sincere belief that the spiffy advice will miraculously and quickly solve their appointment setting deficit. However, this behavior does the opposite. It increases the likelihood that they will not set enough appointments to succeed; thus, they fail.

We all know the sales person who spent all their time trying to market their way, or research their way, to success, but failed. If they had spent the same amount of time *'dialing for dollars'* in a smart way, they would have succeeded.

The honest advice these approaches should give new sales reps is to first determine what we need to do to make quota. We must calculate how many initial appointments we will need each year to fill the pipeline to the right size in order to make our quota. Then, we must figure out where the appointments will come from. If we think we can get all of those appointments from marketing and research; good for us. If we don't think we will, then we need to understand, clearly, that we will need to cold call. [Click here](#) for a free calculator to assist in some basic calculations.

Cold calling is a tough business process; but it is just that, a business process that must be mastered. It is relatively straightforward to become more **efficient** and **effective** at cold calling, but there are no shortcuts – there are only smarter ways to approach the challenge.

But, here is the most compelling reason to become competent at the business process of cold calling – the same process, when used to make calls into the names from warm sources, will increase the number of initial appointments generated from those sources. The technique and process used to set appointments when cold calling is also the best way to work 'warm leads.' Because of our powerful cold calling techniques, warm leads are comparative 'slam dunks,' so we will convert more of them into appointments. Therefore, we will not need to cold call as much. Being competent at hitting three pointers makes free throws much easier and makes slam dunks, well, slam dunks.

The smart approach for new sales reps is to examine the underlying metrics and Best Practices needed to succeed in your market with your solution. As a process, you must first know where you are, since every plan for improvement needs a starting point.

Ask yourself these questions about your current metrics and process. Do you know how many dials you make before you get a conversation; and then, how many conversations you have before you set an appointment? Do you have techniques for improving those metrics? As for Best Practices, how many times over the next few weeks should you call a given target on your list? How frequently should you make those calls – hours apart, days apart, or weeks apart? What messaging will you apply on each attempt? And, if you don't reach them, should you throw that name away or file that name away for a future pursuit?

The real truth is that the business process of cold calling is often a necessity. But it does not have to be painful, unproductive or boring; it just has to be smartly done.

So, believe what you want about the role of marketing and research in your success. But, whatever you do, do not risk your career on the belief you can find a short cut.