

In Some Ways, the Best Practices in Cold Calling Defy Logic

by Valerie Schlitt, President of VSA, Inc.



Contrary to popular wisdom, these tactics really do work:

- Voice Messages
- Responding to "send information requests"
- Calling prospects 10 - 20 times
- Calling prospects back after they initially have no interest

In fact, we've done every one of these and produced results for our clients.

1) Voice Messages

Two of our clients recently made big sales from calls that were returned from VSA voice messages.

Here's the trick. Only leave voice messages when you know you have the right decision maker. Make the message short and compelling. Have a specific reason for prospects to call you back. When you leave the number, speak slowly and clearly. Don't sound like a sales person, even though the prospects know you are. You might want to add a little "Um" or "Well" in the message to make sure you don't sound scripted.

2) Responding to "send information requests"

We have set many, many qualified appointments after sending emails with "more information." About a third of these appointments have resulted in sales.

Here's the trick. Only send information that is relevant to the prospect. Before you send the information, tell the prospect that you'll be following up afterwards to get some feedback. Then, differentiate yourself by sending an interesting attachment, making a unique offer. Keep the message short - about a paragraph or two. Then, be dogged about your follow-up process!

3) Calling 10 - 20 times

We have set dozens of appointments after the 25th call.

Here's the trick. Identify the top tier prospects you want to reach. Develop a plan to connect with these individuals by calling them on a consistent basis, even if you feel you're being intrusive. Leave voice messages periodically, but not on every call.

4) Calling prospects back after they initially have no interest

There are at least three VSA clients whose products are up for renewal every year or two.

There are several other VSA clients who target firms where decision makers are not ready to purchase.

For every prospect who first said "no," about 20% later set an appointment 6 - 12 months later.

Here's the trick. Try to learn as much as possible about the prospect's current provider, and when the contract is up for renewal. Or, try to learn something about the prospect's business, in order to project when they may be ready for your service. Plan a call about 2 months prior to the date when the prospect might become interested in speaking.

Then, be persistent in trying to get in touch, referencing your prior conversation.

What we've learned is that there are rarely silver bullets or short cuts to getting your foot in the door. If no one else is leaving messages or sending more information and you do, you can set yourself apart. If you are persistent with your follow-up, you definitely differentiate yourself. Most often, it's the extra effort that helps you get through to decision makers and wins you sales!

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