

Is Cold Calling Obsolete? by Valerie Schlitt, President of VSA, Inc.

People ask whether B2B Cold Calling is still effective, and whether it has become obsolete.

We say with all certitude:

Cold Calling remains an incredibly effective prospecting tool. It combines the critically important personal touch with the ability to target decision makers that you would not normally reach.



At the same time, changes in technology, workloads, competition, and business practices have definitely changed the Cold Calling climate.

How Cold Calling Has Changed

- **Shorter Industry Life Cycles:** Industries are maturing at a rapid-fire pace. In the past, Cold Callers in fields such as Web Development and Search Engine Optimization - just two examples - could easily set appointments.

That's not the case today.

As industries quickly move along the life-cycle curve, the competitive field becomes more crowded and it's much harder to differentiate one company from another via phone.

If you are in a new industry and one that isn't full of competitors, take advantage of cold calling to capture market share early on.

- **Getting past the Gatekeeper:** Today, the gatekeeper is likely to be voicemail, a cumbersome phone system, or a switchboard operator who cannot forward you without a proper name. You might not even be able to talk to a live person, much less a personal secretary!

When caught in the telephone maze, try pushing different options on your phone to reach a live human. The Sales and Human Resources Departments are often good places to start.

Voicemail is not always bad, either. Often a creative message to interested decision makers will produce return calls.

But, mostly, in today's environment, persistence is the true answer. Just keep calling, multiple times.

- **Email:** Email is now an integral part of the Cold Calling process.

Be sure you integrate emails into your Cold Calling campaigns.

Increasingly, email is a main way for decision makers to communicate. Use your cold calling campaign to get email addresses and then communicate using BOTH phone and email.

Cold Callers need to make contact using their decision makers' preferred method – and often this method is email.

- **Targeting your Audience:** Your prospect list is 60% - 70% the predictor of success.

Technology now enables Cold Callers to cost-effectively target their market in ways they could not previously by purchasing industry-specific lists by size, revenues, and geography. We cannot overstate the value of starting with a strong and focused list.

- **Analytics:** New CRM systems allow you to analyze data that was previously written on paper or spreadsheets. You can measure the speed of your calls, the productivity of your lists, the effectiveness of different callers, and you can see common objections that need to be addressed.

Analyze your results and use your learnings to enhance your Cold Calling programs. There are many CRM systems with good analytics. Your competition is using them. They will help you fine-tune your performance.

- **Grab Attention Quickly:** Everyone is overworked and doing multiple jobs. Your prospects' minds are on other priorities much more so than in the past.

A good Cold Caller grabs the decision maker's attention quickly. She offers them something they want and need.

- **Establish Credibility:** Today, we are all fearful of scams. Especially if your firm is not a household name and your product/service is costly, you will need to establish credibility.

Start doing so right away with the words you use, references to other firms you have helped, and the credentials of your firm.

Also, make sure you have a credibility-building document to email.

In the past, sending more information was considered a push-off. Today, it's a wise request from decision makers who do not want to waste time with an unscrupulous supplier.

Yes, Cold Calling is absolutely a viable prospecting tool used by sales people and marketers every day. Adjusting to the changing environment will keep this tool working for you to build your pipeline, see real client growth, and generate profits.

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