

Heating Up Cold Calls: 21 Tools for Tremendous Telephone

Techniques

By Stephen Libman

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OK, let's heat up the cold-calling debate. Is everyone a salesman? Yes! Do most people have to make cold calls at some point? Yes! Do most people hate to make cold calls? Yes! So, you have two choices; either hire someone (a professional telemarketer) or do it yourself. If you have the budget the hire someone, great! If not, read on.

To be a successful cold-caller you need the following in your toolbox; an understanding of what constitutes a cold-call, a list of qualified people to call, an understanding of the "numbers", a notepad, pens, scripts (at least 3), a calendar, a tracking system, a personal performance tracker, a mirror, relevant reference materials, the right attitude, hands free headset, a commitment, a smile, a schedule, the right questions, a bullet-proof rejection shield, an automatic objection response generator, a clearly defined goal, and the knowledge of your purpose. Let's review each one in detail.

Tool 1 - an understanding of what constitutes a "cold-call"

A cold-call is simply an outbound call made to someone you have never spoken with before. It is not a referral. That's a warm call. It is not any inbound call, even if that's your first contact. An inbound call is a blessing because someone wants to speak with you. Cold calls are often impersonal and must be made "personal" as soon as possible.

Tool 2 - a list of qualified people to call

If you are not calling qualified leads then you might as well get out the yellow pages and start dialing. Hitting qualified people boost your close rate dramatically and eliminates wasted time. Invest your time in qualifying before calling. You will still have to further qualify the prospect once on the phone. It would be ridiculous if you offer enterprise-sized solutions and called a small business. Even if the person wants to buy, you would have nothing to sell.

Tool 3 - an understanding of the "numbers"

OK, we all know it's a numbers game. So, determine what the "superstar" ratio is and work towards beating that figure. Establish where you are now in terms of success and you know how far you need to go. What, you don't have a clue how many calls to make? Ok, try 40 - 60 a day. For example; you place 60 calls resulting in 20 responses, resulting in 5 decision makers reached, resulting in 1 presentation. Assuming you close 1 sale for every 3 presentations, you will have made 180 calls over three days. Your numbers may vary but it's all numbers.

Tools 4 & 5 - a notepad, pens

This is an easy one right? Wrong! The notepad and pens are obviously to take notes. But its the type of notes you take that make the difference. Listen for words describing how they process information. People have a dominant "channel"; visual, auditory or kinetic. They tell us their channel by saying things like "I see what you mean", "I hear what you're saying", "this feels right to me". Also, listen for buzzword terminology and play them back. Say someone says "I'd like to take this step-by-step" you could respond later in the conversation with something like "let me walk (if kinetic) you through this step-by-step". This is powerful stuff! Better yet, it works!

Tool 6 - scripts

Call them notes if you don't like the term scripts. But, have at least three of them; the First Contact, Follow Up, and Close. Scriptwriting is an art but there are some definite guidelines you can follow. Make sure you are using scripts that are proven to work. For example, the First Contact script must include; an introduction, purpose of call, caring for the individual, a number of close-ended questions to ensure you have a decision-maker, probing questions, value statements, action, and close. You can see a lot is involved so make sure you get it right. Need help with your scripts? Get it! It's that important. Don't know where? Contact me!

Tool 7 - a calendar

Finally, an easy one. You need an electronic or paper calendar for reverence. Ties in with Tool 8.

Tool 8 - a tracking system

ACT, Goldmine, Daytimer, make one up, etc, whatever works for you but you must have a way to track every activity.

Tool 9 - a personal performance tracker

This is part of Tool 8 if using automated systems like ACT or Goldmine. Whether you are or not, a personal performance tracker keeps tabs on the statistics, the "numbers". This way you will know how many calls, how many people you reached, etc. It also records your comments such as; how far you got, problems you encountered, notes for improvement, etc. This is an indispensable tool for success.

Tool 10 - a mirror

You simply need to watch your facial expressions making sure you are positive, energetic, and upbeat. It also give you a way to make sure you are using Tool 15.

Tool 11 - relevant reference materials

You will probably need directories and lists of some sort however compiled. Make sure you have those references always handy.

Tool 12 - the right attitude

What is your "AQ" or Attitude Quotient? Without a positive mental attitude things that get you down, keep you down. For making cold-calls you need enthusiasm, you need to feel like a winner even when you are not, you need to exude self-confidence even when yours is low, you need to be excited and passionate about your product or service, and you need positive self-talk to carry you through the tougher moments. The more attitude qualities you have (or subsequently get), the better the results. When someone asks you how you are doing, you answer, "I'm Wired, Fired, and Inspired!" Or, as Attitude Expert Keith D. Harrell always answers "I am Super Fantastic!". Other's I know answer "I'm Taking It To The Next Level!", "Absolutely Outstanding!". You get the point, people, like "UP" people.

Tool 13 - hands-free headset

This should be a given but most salespeople I meet do not have a hands-free headset. A headset will liberate your hands for note taking, liberate your neck from pain (which can at times become debilitating), and liberate your body from your chair (that's right, stand up when you speak, you are clearer and have more passion and energy). Invest in quality! No one likes being on the receiving end of a crackling conversation. And finally, use it! Often those I see that actually have headsets don't use them.

Tool 14 - a commitment

You must make a resolute commitment to get the job done. You must commit to using each of the "tools". You must commit to your success. Without a strong commitment you may renegotiate outcomes with yourself and not hit the peak of the mountain.

Tool 15 - a smile

A smile is not only part of your positive attitude but it will make you feel better. Believe it or not, people on the other end of the receiver can "feel" your smile. Look in the mirror on your desk before making your call and smile. Force it if you must. Then dial the phone. Got someone on the line? Good! Look in the mirror again, smile and stand up. Then speak! This is guaranteed to boost your close rate. Big Time!

Tool 16 - a schedule

One of your commitments is to your schedule. Each profile is different. For example: let's take someone who typically does not make outbound sales calls (cold-calling) but finds themselves in a situation where they now must. In that case, I suggest 2-4 hours a day, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 AM onwards. When you call before 9:00 AM your prospect often answers the phone themselves (rather than voicemail or an assistant). Most people are more receptive in the morning too. Whatever your level of attack, simply adjust the number of hours. It is critical that you stick to your schedule.

Tool 17 - the right questions

You've got the prospect on the phone but what questions do you ask? Please refer to Tool 6 to get an idea. In addition, it is critical that the questions evoke truthful responses. Try and think of yourself in the prospects' position. What would you need to share with someone that would result in them returning value to you? With that, create the questions which will draw it out.

Tool 18 - a bullet-proof rejection shield

Rejection is a reality of any sales process. Get used to it as quickly as possible. It is not you being rejected, it's what you offer. Imagine if every waiter or waitress took rejection personally whenever they offered a cup of coffee. They'd all quit! Most of us reject the server who offers us "an apple pie with that?". Do they quit? Of course not. In fact, they sell a lot of apple pies that would not otherwise be sold. Rejection isn't personal but it is part of the territory and of your success. Strive to get more "No"s than anyone else and you'll probably sell more than anyone else too.

Tool 19 - an automatic objection response generator

Simply put, know every possible objection beforehand and have an answer. Each time you get an objection you've never heard, write it down and review it later for a response. Trust me on this, every single objection you will ever hear will have been heard before by someone and can have a reasonable comeback. It's your job to be prepared.

Tool 20 - a clearly defined goal

Some of you will say the last two tools should have come first. You're right. They are the most important tools in the toolbox. That's why I put them at the end. So as to have a lasting impression. Having a defined goal simply means how much and by when! Start with the end first. How much incremental profit do you need to make from these activities on a monthly basis? How long should

that take? Given the "numbers" game, how many closed sales would that require monthly? To generate that level, how many meetings would be required? From that, determine how many calls per month, week and finally per day would be required. You then emerge with a roadmap for success.

Tool 21 - the knowledge of your purpose

And, the hands-down winner for the most important tool is knowing why you are jumping through all these hoops anyways. Without a clear knowledge of your purpose you will almost certainly quit. This is a simple process but by no means easy. The rewards are definitely worth the effort but you will be challenged often. Having a firm picture of your "why" will keep you on course. Don't know your purpose? I can help! Give me a call.

The Wrap Up

So, we're done, or are we? You have the tools for exceptional success. Now it's up to you to take them, pepper them with your personality and perform, perform, perform.

About the Author

Stephen Libman is a Corporate Performance Strategist specializing in human interaction. He generates improved customer service and higher performing staff. He discusses not so much the "what to's" and "how to's", but rather "what to be" and "why". As a Speaker and Business Strategist, Stephen consults with senior executives of performance-oriented organizations. Together, quality initiatives are conceived and developed. Results are distilled into communication strategies and systems. This yields a customized and teachable program that "WOW" customers and boosts performance.

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