

11 Tips to Help You Get New Clients Through Cold Calling

By John Wood

Today, I'm going to give you some basic strategies and tips that will help you get more clients and make more money from your freelance writing business.

We'll be using an effective self-marketing strategy: cold calling.

To start off, I'd like to share a brief story ...

About 10 years ago, I was talking to my (now ex) brother-in-law on the phone. He was in the process of starting his own business.

He was very frustrated. He had gotten some initial business through existing contacts but was having trouble finding new clients.

He'd get prospects on the phone by cold calling and give them his pitch. But he was finding it difficult to get them interested enough to actually book an appointment.

I asked him to tell me what he said to people when he got them on the phone.

He gave me his pitch verbatim.

Having worked in sales jobs where I had to book my own appointments, I instantly knew what his problem was.

All he did was talk about what his company did.

It's a common mistake prospectors make. They think the world revolves around them and what they're up to ...

... when it really revolves around the prospects.

I told him what he should be saying instead.

That simple change in approach led to his company getting in the door (and closing) some of the biggest companies in Canada, including the world's second-largest fast food chain and one of the country's largest gas station chains.

If you've never cold called before or feel you could use some help, I've put together 11 tips to help you be successful:



Tip #1: Do research – Research the company you are calling. Look for the contact name and email of the person you are targeting.

Does the company have an e-newsletter? If they do, sign up for it (you can always unsubscribe later). Look at the competition's websites to get a feel for what they are up against.

Look at the home page of their website: is it company-centric or user-centric? Are there ways you would improve it?

Note: This is not to say you are going to use this information in your initial call. You want to probe first to get a better understanding of their situation before making a decision on whether you should run a few improvement suggestions by them. You might not want to make any recommendations until your follow-up meeting with the client.

Tip #2: Define your goal – What is the ultimate goal of your phone call? If they are local, would you like to set up a one-on-one meeting? Or do you want to set up a follow-up phone meeting? A common second step would be for you to send your prospect information about yourself (either via email or through the mail) and then schedule a follow-up call after they've had time to review the information.

Your goal could change over the course of the call depending upon their answers, but it's always good to have an idea of what you want to accomplish every time you call.

Tip #3: Voicemail or no voicemail? – I seldom leave a voicemail. What I've found is that people rarely call you back. If you do leave a voicemail, one benefit is when you call back again, people will say to you, "Oh yes, I got your message," – which will make the call not quite as "cold."

When you leave a message, introduce yourself much the same way you would if you got them in person. Then mention you're inquiring whether they ever use freelance writers and if they are the person you should talk to. Next, leave a short sentence as to why they should deal with you. "I recently wrote three emails for a client that generated \$17,000 worth of sales in a little under a week," or something like that. Or you could quote a customer testimonial to them. "My client Troy and Sons recently told me that I am the best email writer they have ever seen."

Then leave your name, number, and email. Add the following line before signing off: "If I don't hear from you, I will try you again in a few days." (Or "next week" – whichever is more appropriate.)

Tip #4: Call when you are most likely to connect with the ideal people – In his book *The 4-Hour Workweek*, author Tim Ferriss talks about the best time to make cold calls. One of the biggest obstacles Ferriss originally ran into when making cold calls was that he was being blocked by the receptionists or "gatekeepers." He avoided them by calling between 7:30 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. (before the gatekeeper arrives) and between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. at night (after the gatekeeper leaves). Ferriss says he got twice as much done in 1/8th the time. In his book *The Well-Fed Writer*, Peter Bowerman recommends calling Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. He says Monday is usually "back on track" day for people, and Friday, while still potentially good, there may be less people around.

Tip #5: Make receptionists and assistants your allies – If you do get the receptionist or your contact's assistant on the phone, make every effort to create a good relationship with them. Ask them for their help. Explain what you're trying to do and ask them for advice on the best time to call. Always remember that receptionists and assistants are just doing their job. If you're up front with them and ask for their help or a favor, they will (usually) do whatever they can to assist you.

Tip #6: Make it a two-call process – If you can't find the name of the decision-maker, you might want to use this "trick" I sometimes use. You call up the receptionist and say something along the lines of the following:

Receptionist: Widgets Incorporated.

You: Hi. Maybe you can help me out. Could you tell me who oversees your marketing department? I'd like to mail them a letter.

Receptionist: That would be Delores Bernie.

You: Thank you. Can I ask you what Delores's title is please?

Receptionist: Vice President of Marketing.

You: Okay great. Thanks very much. Can I get your name?

Receptionist: My name is Julie.

You: Okay, thanks, Julie. Have a nice day.

Now, while you might want to send a letter to Delores introducing yourself, more importantly, you've got her name and title. (This might seem a little tricky, but chances are they won't remember you when you call back.) When you do call back (a few days later), if you get the receptionist, your conversation would go something like this:

Receptionist: Widgets Incorporated.

You: Hi Julie, may I speak to Delores please?

Receptionist: Bernie or Shriver?

You: Bernie, I'm sorry, I should have used her full name.

Receptionist: I'll put you through.

You: Thanks, Julie.

You won't always get through, but you'll have a better chance than if you try to get through on your first call. The key is to speak in a casual "just calling up to speak to a friend" tone. This is effective because while the receptionist's job is to filter some people out, it's also to let the right people in.

Tip #7: Always try for the highest person on the totem pole – They tend to be more difficult to get a hold of, but the extra time it takes is usually worth it. Here's why. Let's say the name of the owner of the company is a lady by the name of Sharon. You call up Sharon and introduce yourself.

At this point, she tells you that the person you need to speak to is Jill. You thank her and tell her that you will give Jill a call. Here's where it pays off. When you get Jill on the phone, after you introduce yourself to her, you say, "I was speaking to Sharon, and she suggested I give you a call. Did I catch you at a good time?" Immediately, you have a captive audience in Jill. Then you proceed with your questions to uncover what opportunities await you.

Tip #8: The first thing to do when you get the potential decision-maker on the phone – Introduce yourself. State clearly your name and then give them your one- or two-line description of what you do. If you've come up with an elevator pitch for yourself, you could use it here. For example, you could say something like:

"Hi, my name is YOUR NAME. I'm a freelance web writer and marketing strategist who specializes in writing sales letters and emails that boost online sales and profits for companies in the BLANK industry."

Then proceed to Tip #9.

Tip #9: Ask them if "now" is a good time – Next, ask them if they have a couple of minutes to chat or if you've caught them at a good time. This is very important. Do not skip this step. If they say yes, move to Tip #10.

If they say no, ask them when a better time to call is. If they give you a time, tell them you'll call back then. Stress that you won't keep them on the phone long – "I'll be very brief" or "I'll only take a few minutes of your time" – in an effort to see if they will go ahead and speak to you now. You always want to look for a way to talk to them right then and there, while at the same time

respecting them if they say they are unable to talk to you at that time.

Tip #10: Ask if they use freelancers – If they say yes, ask them if they are the right person to talk to at their company (if they haven't volunteered the information already). If they are, ask, "Do you mind if I ask you a few quick questions?"

If they are not the right person, ask who is and the best time and number to reach them at (ask if the correct contact person has a direct line and/or email address).

Here are some of the questions you can ask to get the ball rolling:

- Do you use freelance copywriters as part of your marketing strategy?
- What's the biggest challenge you face with online sales?
- How is your autoresponder series working for you?
- What is your top marketing priority right now?
- If you could solve one marketing challenge right now, what would that look like?
- What is the number one project that would help you get more leads or make more sales if it were completed right now?

At some point, the conversation will direct itself based on your client's answers.

Always end your conversation with a plan for the next time you will speak. For example, you might say, "I will send over my information (and proposal if your conversation advances rapidly) and follow up with you by phone by next Tuesday."

Tip #11: Track your activities – The key to efficient cold calling is to track your activity. Make notes of every contact you make with a prospect or customer. Schedule follow-up calls so you don't have to rely on your memory. A good (and free) customer relationship management option is [Zoho CRM](#). It's web-based. If you prefer software that resides on your local hard drive, [ACT](#) is an excellent choice.

Here's the bottom line – as Peter Bowerman notes in *The Well-Fed Writer*:

"The more effectively and consistently you tell the world who you are, what you do and why they should hire you, the more money you'll make. Period."

If you use these eleven tips and consistently take action, you can't help but get more clients for your freelance [copywriting business](#).

And when that happens, you'll have less downtime between paying assignments, more checks flowing into your mailbox, and more importantly, less stress and more peace of mind.

Published: May 21, 2012

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5 Responses to "11 Tips to Help You Get New Clients Through Cold Calling"

Thanks for writing this article. It was an eye-opener and really added value. I think a lot of readers will benefit from it.

However, I think it is equally important to find out where the head honchos spend their time.

Do they spend time at a particular golf course? How about parties? At your local trade association? How do they relax and unwind.

A lot of business deals have been clinched in relaxed and informal settings.

Your clients are more likely to be receptive in such congenial environments.

Archan Mehta – over a year ago

Thank you very much. I am planning to leave my company and be a freelance web developer. I tried cold-calling several times to catch some clients but I end up reaching the receptionists who always hang up even before I finish introducing myself and what I do. It is a difficult job for a freelancer to start his job here in India :(Thanks for your tips. I'm going to try again.

Guest (Akshay) – over a year ago

Awesome read, thank you.

Guest (Brad) – over a year ago

This is Awesome wonderful information.. Grate

Guest (Evince) – over a year ago

Thanks so much for this, John. I'm printing this out to prepare to start making some cold calls in the coming weeks.

Guest (Mateeka Quinn) – over a year ago

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