

## The Smart Salesperson’s Guide to Finding Quality Leads and Cold Calling

Your ability to *create opportunities* is the single most important ingredient for how successful you will be in prospecting and developing new business.

### Salespeople who are “creators”:

- Initiate conversation with anyone and everyone ... cold
- Take control of all next steps (“I’ll call you”; I’ll come to you”; I’ll email you”)
- Love the “hunt” or chase
- Demonstrate self-starter behavior
- View being assertive as a necessary step to advance a sales opportunity or relationship
- Derive job satisfaction from “making something from nothing”
- Sell, often, for ego and money
- Enjoy the unknown
- Believe in the old adage that “you never know unless you ask/try”

So before you take on a role that requires prospecting and initiating contact with customers, ask yourself if you have the necessary attitude and abilities. If your answer is YES, then your next question is...

### Where Do I Find Quality Leads?

#### 1. Find Out What Kind of Companies/Customers Should Buy from Us and Why

A company/customer that *does buy* is different from company/customer that *should buy*. Be a snob! Realize quickly that what you offer will be perceived very differently by a broad audience – some will view you as a strategic solution while others will view you as flogging a ‘nice to have’ or a commodity. All audiences are out there.

Understanding why one company/customer would value you more than another will not only help you target the Assemble a Complete List of Possible Lead Sources

Once you know what audience most values your offerings, create a list of possible lead sources:

<p><b>Your Network</b></p>	<p>This is normally the starting point for people moving to a new sales role and remaining in the same or similar industry.</p> <p><b>Caution:</b> This lead source will run dry quickly. Don’t rely on it too long.</p>
<p><b>LinkedIn</b></p>	<p>LinkedIn and other business-related social media tools are very valuable, but only help to generate real leads if you work it.</p>

	<p>Posting your name, a few things about your job, and your picture is like “putting your resume in the black sky”. You need to constantly add content, search out others, etc.</p> <p><b>Caution:</b> It’s easy to spend all day on LinkedIn. People have begun to rely on it too much. People still buy from people so be sure to get out there.</p>
<p><b>Referrals</b></p>	<p>There are two ways of securing a referral – one is <i>waiting for it to come to you organically</i> and the other is <i>asking for one</i>. Obviously, asking for a referral is the option you have control over.</p> <p>To drive the referral process, ask your customer to send an “e-Intro” to both parties (Bob meet Bill; Bill meet Bob). Then you do the rest.</p>
<p><b>Associations</b></p>	<p>Joining key associations can be very valuable as long as they house your audience.</p> <p><b>Caution:</b> If you are not comfortable cold networking (talking to strangers), this is NOT the forum for you. Don’t waste your night eating veggies and dip in the corner.</p>
<p><b>COIs</b></p>	<p>That stands for Centers of Influence. This is our #1 lead source at Focus. COIs are people who have access to the audience you target and could introduce you – they are <i>people who know the people you want to meet</i>.</p> <p>COIs already have credibility with your audience. Your audience will take their call, take their advice, and value their recommendation. For you, that means warm, interested, and pre-qualified leads coming into your business already believing you are worth talking to.</p> <p>You must understand that building a relationship with a COI is a marathon, not a sprint. You should have no expectations that anything is going to come immediately from a new relationship. Once you realize that, then the only way to keep the flame lit between you and them over the long- term (assuming you’ve both agreed you are a good fit) is for you to take the initiative to stay in touch with them. Sounds so simple, yet most don’t do it.</p> <p>Every few months, I send an individual personal email to my COIs to share news in my business, updates on any past relationships they have sent over, and lastly, something personal going on in my life. I add this task to my CRM so I never forget to keep these connections strong.</p> <p><b>Caution:</b> You have to work this avenue. You need to diarize to talk to these people often. Stay in their head. Befriend them.</p>

<p><b>Marketing-generated Leads</b></p>	<p>These are leads that come from any marketing efforts and initiatives by your company.</p> <p>Examples include trade show exhibiting, incoming phone inquiries, web leads, print or online advertising, mail or email blasts, conferences, etc.</p> <p>Of course these are the leads everyone wants because they come to you at least “warm”.</p> <p><b>Tip:</b> Because these people asked to be contacted, you can and should be more assertive in booking a follow-up. Don’t play the email or phone chase. Email the lead with a specific date and time you plan to call them.</p>
<p><b>Online RFP Sources</b></p>	<p>Depending on your industry, there may be RFP sites where companies can post RFP requests, like Merx and Biddingo (both are for the construction industry).</p> <p><b>Caution:</b> Often these sites do NOT allow you to talk directly with the companies, only allowing you to submit your bid either directly or through the website. While each industry is different, our general philosophy is that without the opportunity to present your “face” to the potential customer, your odds of winning are often low (either lowest price wins OR the customer is likely going to remain with their incumbent).</p>
<p><b>Cold Prospecting</b></p>	<p>For many, this is the one lead source we dread the most.</p> <p>The first question is: where am I going to get a contact list? Options include having your company buy a list for you (either via a list broker or a service like SalesGenie), using the list from the associations you joined, walking trade shows where the exhibitors are your audience, using social media (LinkedIn), doing online research, etc.</p> <p>The next question is: how should I approach them? There are only three options here:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cold call</li> <li>• Cold email</li> <li>• Cold visit</li> </ul> <p>The general belief is that while cold calling is the most challenging and requires the most patience and persistence, it can yield far better results than random emailing or drop-ins.</p> <p><b>Remember:</b> When I say “cold prospecting”, it means talking to an audience you do not know at all. If you can name drop or find a point of personal or network connection, the email approach would be just as good.</p>

## 2. Decide Which Lead Sources to Target

Which lead sources should you target? A simple answer is to balance everything on a consistent basis, organized by priority. You should never rely on just one lead source. *The more seeds you plant, water, fertilize, and nurture, the more flowers will grow.*

### Tip:

To ensure I work all my leads sources and COIs on a regular basis, my trick is to set a reoccurring task or to-do in my CRM.

For some lead sources, I schedule myself a monthly task (because it's a higher priority), while others may only be every 3 to 6 months. When it's time to call on my COIs to say hello, ask a client for a referral, or research five new contacts on LinkedIn, the task is there to drive me.

Once you've identified your leads, it's time to start calling.

## The Strategy of an Introduction (Cold) Call

Preparing an **Opening Statement** for your Introduction (Cold) Call will let you organize your thoughts and have a smooth flow when beginning the call. Over time, it will flow naturally.

Here are the five components to your opening script:

### 1. Find the "Bridge" – What Is Your Point of Connection?

Before picking up the phone, use online research, LinkedIn, or other sources to find a common point of connection between you and the person you are about to call. The connection could be similar industry experience, people you both know (business or personal), competitors you have worked with, etc.

The stronger the connection, the faster your audience will trust you.

### 2. Personal Introduction – Include a Greeting and the Reason for Your Call

Let's start here. A simple little change we suggest is to say: "Hello, it's \_\_\_\_\_ calling from \_\_\_\_\_" instead of: "Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I am calling from \_\_\_\_\_".

While this may not appear to be a significant change, using this introduction can help put the prospect at ease since it's more causal and almost appears as though you know him/her. The traditional introduction is very formal and immediately denotes to the receiver that you are a stranger, which often leads to a defensive response.

From here, try to use the "bridge" to find common ground quickly.

Lastly, in terms of **style**, honesty is the best policy – so be upfront in announcing you don't formally know each other. They know that, you know that, so just say it. This approach quickly illustrates **vulnerability**, which often triggers people to be less defensive and more empathetic.

Here are some examples:

**Example 1:**

“Hello, it’s Joe Smith from Focus America.

Since we haven’t met before I wanted to call you to make a simple introduction. From what I have read, I understand your organization \_\_\_\_\_ (state simply and concisely what you know about them) and based on that, I think our two companies may be a good fit because we help companies \_\_\_\_\_”.

**Example 2:**

“Hello, it’s Joe Smith from Focus America.

The reason I am calling is because recently we have \_\_\_\_\_ (state a recent milestone or success your company has had that you feel would be important, relevant, and relatable to them) and while I don’t know if you have a need for what we do, given you are/do \_\_\_\_\_ (state why you thought that the milestones or successes would be relevant/relatable to them – for example, they are in the same industry or use the same technology/equipment), I thought it was important enough to reach out to you to make an introduction”.

**3. Company Introduction (Benefit Statement) – What Does Your Company Help to Increase or Reduce, and Why Are You Worth Talking To?**

Most important: This is NOT a pitch. You are not trying to sell your products, services, or solutions yet. You are trying to find a business connection, generate curiosity, and drive a further conversation.

Before you begin asking questions, give a quick snapshot of who you are by telling your contact what you do that helps improve or reduce something important to them. This statement serves to pique your customer’s interest and desire to listen to more.

**Here are some tips:**

- Keep it brief. Nobody wants or has the time to listen to you go on and on about your company.
- While your product/service may have dozens of benefits, select the one benefit you feel will register/resonate with that prospect the most – not what you do. Tell them the “what” and the “why” – not the how. For example:

**Example 1:** “We help companies \_\_\_\_\_.” OR “We save our clients \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Example 2:** “We increase productivity by \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Example 3:** “We are the largest company for \_\_\_\_\_ and that means our customers enjoy \_\_\_\_\_.”

- Be direct. People are busy. Most will appreciate a more direct approach.

**Example 1:** “I know you get dozens of calls from companies like mine so I am sure you are wondering how are we different. We are different because \_\_\_\_\_.”

**Example 2:** “We specialize in working with companies to reduce their overall web design expenses while generating more traffic to their website.”

**Example 3:** “The reason I am calling is that we may be able to help you cut down on your shipping expenses.”

The challenge most sales reps have, however, is an incomplete understanding of the benefits their product or service truly offers. To uncover the benefit, start by answering the following questions:

- What problems do your products/services solve for customers?
- How do these products/services solve the problems?
- What impacts/symptoms of these problems would your customers experience?
- What result should your customer expect from your product/service as it pertains to their problems?
- Why would a customer be better off with your product/service vs. the competitor’s?
- Why would a potential customer not want your service?

Before moving on to the third component (Qualify), you need to get them involved in the conversation now that you have introduced yourself, your company, and outlined what you can help them improve and/or reduce. The objective here is to tell them that in order to deliver the potential benefit, you need to get information.

**Example 1:** “I have a few ideas that I would like to discuss to see if this would be of any value to you and your company.”

**Example 2:** “To determine this, I’d like to find out what you are using for \_\_\_\_\_.”

Remember to avoid questions like, “*Is now a good time to talk?*”

#### **4. Qualify – Are You Talking to the Right Person? Is this Company a Good Fit for You?**

The next step is to qualify. This is an important step for both you and your prospect to ensure you don’t waste each other’s time.

**Qualify the Company:** If you have not been able to get answers to your qualifiers via your research before you call, now is the time to ask your remaining qualifying questions to ensure this company is a fit for you.

Remember, need or interest at that moment is NOT a qualifier.

**Qualify the Person:** To find out if they are the right person, simply ask them what role they play in making decisions regarding your product/service. You can also ask them how decisions are made in their organization regarding your product/service.

*Note:* Avoid asking them if they are “the decision maker”. It will often result in a defensive response.

## 5. Transition – Add a Transition to a Question to Generate Dialogue

If you have done your introductions and qualification well, the transition will feel very natural. During this phase, you are simply trying to learn more about them by asking lots of open-ended questions about their current business situation as it pertains to the relevance/appropriateness of your products/services. Again, leverage any information you have researched (*"I understand you do xyz. Given that, how do you ...."*).

Unless the prospect wants to have a more in-depth conversation, this is also a point to begin to exit your conversation.

To exit, **ALWAYS start by recapping** what your customer just said – especially what is most important to them.

Then, **introduce a "next action"** (something you are going to do next) but be very clear in describing what it is. Are you going to send them something? If so, what are you going to send them, how (email/mail), and when? If you are going to follow up with them, again be very specific about when.

### General Tips:

- Ask lots of "open" questions – ask two times more questions than they do.
- Don't try to sell – just try to "get to know them".
- Be vulnerable – be upfront that you don't know them but you felt it was worthwhile to call to introduce yourself for "x" reason. Be clear on what "x" reason is *before* you call.
- Match *their* style – are they short and direct? Don't talk about fluffy stuff. Are they social? Listen, share, and note. Do they ask lots of questions? Engage them.
- Show empathy – show you understand what is truly happening in their business.
- Never close the call without a next action that you commit to facilitate, no matter how simple it may be. "I will call you soon" is not a specific-enough next action.

Remember, your main goal is to simply build some basic trust and rapport that you can build upon during your next call. Anything more than that is a bonus.

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### You may also want to read:

- [How Do I Know I Hired a Salesperson Who Is a "Hunter"?](#)
- [Wanna Turn Leads Into Sales? Don't Give Them to Your Sales Reps!](#)