

COLD CALLING BEST PRACTICES

FOR SALES TEAMS



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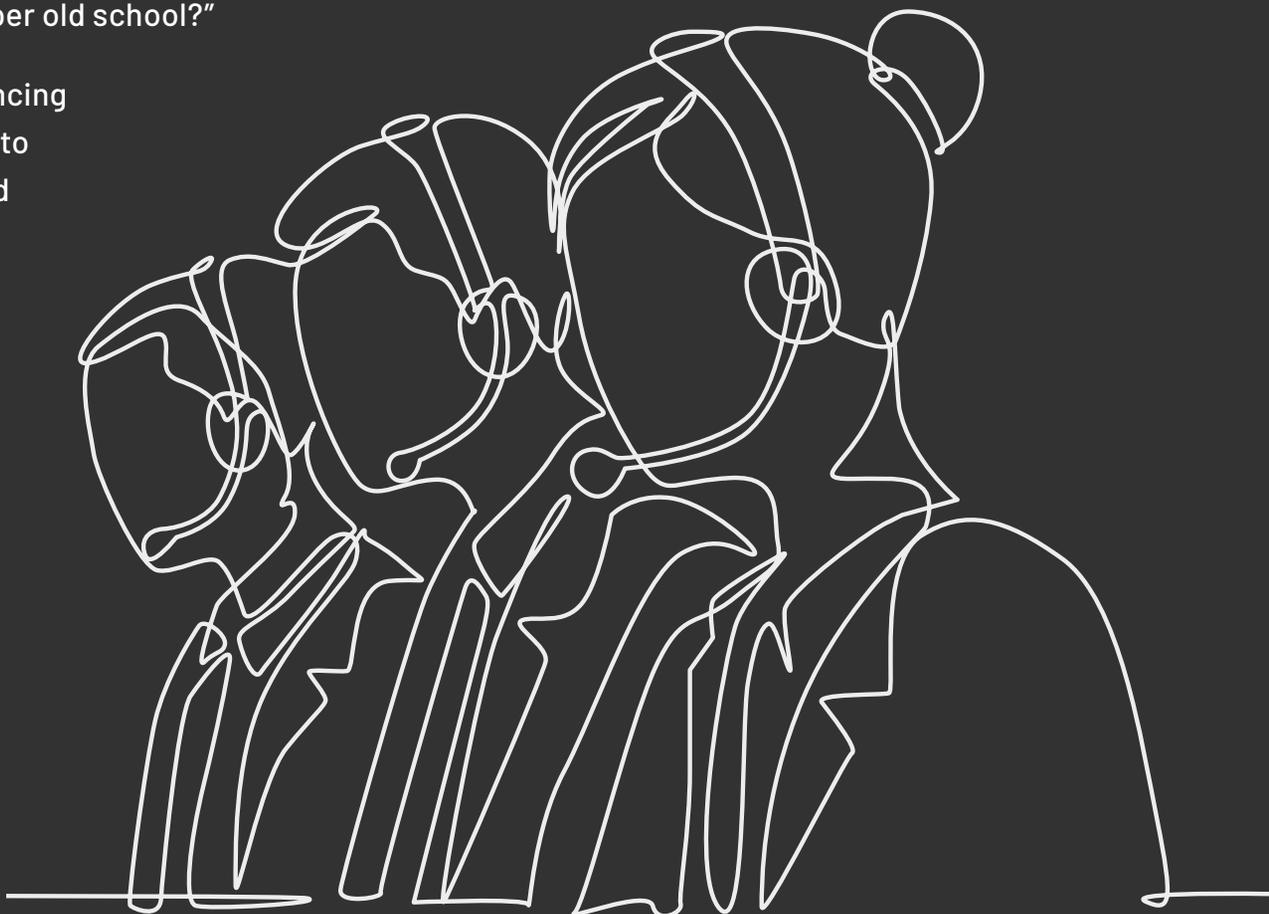
Introduction

“Wait, businesses still cold call? Isn’t that, like, super old school?”

While cold calling may sound outdated in an advancing digital age, it’s still a reliable and sustainable way to generate new leads for your business. In fact, cold calling best practices are constantly evolving to align with the times.

For the past decade, our sales and business development reps have been practicing outbound sales efforts to generate new business opportunities. While many businesses have lost faith in the power of cold calling, we believe it’s because they don’t know how to do it effectively.

By following this guide, your sales team has the opportunity to develop a sustainable sales pipeline, effectively pitch prospects, and maximize your ROI.



1 Embrace the Interruption

In this day and age, you need to stand out with your cold calling efforts. Key decision-makers (KDMs) pick up the phone more often than you think, so it's crucial that you take the first 30 seconds to set yourself apart from other cold callers.

When speaking with key decision-makers, embrace the fact that you're interrupting their day. KDMs don't just sit at their desks all day waiting for work—they're absolutely in the middle of something and they set aside what they're doing to speak with you. As you talk with a KDM, acknowledge that you know they're busy and run with it. For example, consider introducing yourself with a permission-based intro:

"I know I probably caught you in the middle of something, but do you have a minute for me to tell you why I'm calling?"

Once they give you permission to speak, say:

"Awesome, thank you! Typically when I talk with [PROSPECT'S JOB TITLE] like yourself around the country, they tell me they value [VALUE PROPOSITION]"



When you go into your pitch, make sure you are different from other cold callers. KDMs get tons of calls a day, and it typically takes the first 30 seconds to stand out. For example, consider using humor to your advantage, by saying something like:

"I know I probably caught you in the middle of lunch. What're we eating today?"

Another way to stand out from other cold callers is by being empathetic. What challenges are they going through in their role? What struggles are they facing in their company right now? As a sales development rep, you're set up with an incredible opportunity to be empathetic and caring toward other people. In addition, your business could be the solution that takes a significant number of their problems away.

2 Actively Listen to Gatekeepers and Prospects

If you get anything from this guide, it should be this:

Actively listen to the gatekeeper and prospect. Active listening is a best practice that every cold caller (or salesperson in general) should master. We know that salespeople are Chatty Kathys and love engaging with others; however, without active listening, you risk ineffective conversations with key decision-makers that could have resulted in high-earning business deals.

While many cold callers fear the gatekeeper, they're simply trying to do their job. If they're not letting you talk to a potential KDM, consider asking questions to learn more about their company or the best point of contact to discuss your company's product or service. Rather than avoiding them, you might be able to gather crucial lead qualifying information, such as the square footage of the building, number of employees, number of workstations, and more.

When speaking with a gatekeeper, provide them with a "mini" pitch to gain their trust and explain the advantages your company has for their business. If you pitch them well enough, they may feel like the KDM is missing out on

something if they don't transfer your call. However, if the KDM is not available, have the gatekeeper take a message for them to call you back later.

How To Be a Better Active Listener

Ask open-ended questions. If you don't ask open-ended questions, you won't have anything meaningful to listen to. By asking closed-ended questions, you risk answers with "yes" or "no" responses, limiting the depth of the conversation. When asking open-ended questions, you enable the prospect to open up and speak more about their likes and dislikes of their current solution.



Gather information and stay organized. Gathering information and keeping all your ducks in a row sets you up for an effective conversation. When getting information from prospects, make sure you take good notes. If you have a customer relationship management (CRM) platform, you have the opportunity to reflect on past conversations by checking the notes.

In addition, when using CRM software for your cold calling efforts, make sure the notes section stays up to date with the most current conversations. This allows new sales reps assigned to the prospects to review notes and determine what they need to talk about to get them closer to scheduling a sales appointment.

Speak slowly and don't interrupt while they're talking.

It's no surprise that salespeople are typically pretty outgoing and chatty, which can be both a blessing and a curse. As you pitch a KDM, make sure you don't get too ahead of yourself. Give prospects time to speak and thoroughly think of answers to your questions. Pitching a KDM is thrilling for many cold callers; it boosts adrenaline, which may cause you to talk quickly and interrupt them while they're talking. While you may push to get your two cents in, remember to take your foot off the gas pedal, slow down, and listen to what they have to say.

Practice overcoming objections. Rejection is never easy, whether it's personal or professional. While many sales reps fear objection, it's inevitable and should be expected in the sales industry. When a KDM rejects a sales meeting, accept it and discover ways to work around their objection. Before calling on a prospective business, develop a list of potential objections and rework them to keep the conversation going.

For example, if a prospect says they recently signed a contract with a new B2B service provider, consider asking the following questions:

- Why did you change service providers?
- What made you want to partner with them rather than another service provider?
- When do you plan to reevaluate your new contract with them?

These questions allow you to understand their process, what they want from a B2B service provider, and when to follow up with them next. The answers to these questions can be put in your notes to review next time you pitch them.

3 Only Pitch Relevant Products or Services

When you actively listen to prospects, you have the opportunity to understand what's important to them and their business. By actively listening to KDMs, you can pitch products or services that provide relief to their pain points. In return, this encourages them to actively listen to what your company has to offer.

For example, let's suggest that you're pitching for a managed service provider. If a prospect says that their current MSP doesn't deliver cloud migration services, you would want to discuss how your business has helped companies in similar situations perform cloud migration services. However, you wouldn't want to initially mention how great your business's customer service is.

While that may be true, it's not a significant concern of theirs, so it strays the conversation away from their pain points.

When pitching prospects, listen to their pain points and discuss how your products or services will alleviate their concerns.



4 Discover Current Provider Pain Points

Finding prospect pain points is one of the most beneficial cold calling best practices. When you discover a prospect has pain points with their current service provider, you have more of an opportunity to strongly pitch prospects and get them to agree to an appointment with your company.

One of the easiest ways to discover prospect pain points is by asking open-ended questions. As mentioned previously, asking open-ended questions encourages KDMs to speak more about their current solution. If they're satisfied with their services, ask what they like about them. Along with that, consider asking this question:

"If you had a magic wand that could change something about your current service solution, what would it be?"

As silly as it may sound, this question breaks the ice a bit between you and the prospect and allows you to discover potential underlying issues.



5 Ask About Their Buying Process

When it comes to making financial business decisions, there are typically several decision-makers involved. While a C-level executive may be the one signing the checks, they may not be the best point of contact because they don't understand the ins and outs of the solution. Along with not fully understanding their current solution, C-level executives can also be tough to reach because they typically have many other responsibilities.

For example, suppose you're cold calling for an HVAC company. In that case, the facility manager may be the best point of contact because they know everything there is to know about the building's heating and air conditioning units. However, they may not be the one who makes financial decisions like changing the company's service provider. While a facility manager may know everything about the building's infrastructure, the CFO may be the one who signs on the dotted line.

Understanding a prospect's purchasing process gives you a better opportunity to set up valuable sales appointments. If a facility manager agrees to meet with your HVAC company, extend the calendar invite to the CFO as well. This ensures that everyone involved with the HVAC systems and buying process is present and can get all the information they need to make a reasonable purchasing decision.



6 Always Close With Specific Dates and Times

When you close up to the discretion of your KDM, you're making yourself look more vulnerable and less confident in your role as an SDR. As you close a prospect, you should always have at least four dates or times in the next two or three days for them to meet with another member of your sales team. This also increases the likelihood of them showing up to the sales meetings, reducing your no-show rate.

Here's an example of how to close with a prospect:

"Based on our discussion here, I'd like to set you up some time to speak with my Account Executive, [YOUR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE'S NAME]. It looks like they have some time tomorrow at 2:00 or 4:00 p.m. open, which time works best for you?"

By doing this, you put the KDM in a good spot to think about their availability rather than saying no. In addition, this also makes you look more confident, skilled, and organized in your role.



7 Nurture Each Lead In the Sales Pipeline

With cold calling, timing is everything. Lead nurturing is essential for a successful cold calling program because not every prospect is ready to make structural or financial moves when you pitch them.

If a company outsources sectors of their day-to-day business operations, they more than likely have a contract in place. B2B contracts are typically year-long contracts and are reevaluated at the same time each year. Lead nurturing is important because it allows you to follow up with prospects regularly to check in and see how things are going with their current provider. This provides top-of-mind awareness for when it comes time to reevaluate their contract. If they are looking to make a change, your company will be the first one that comes to mind.

Each time you follow up with a prospective business, provide them with a new piece of value. Before jumping into your pitch, review previous call notes with them to refresh their memory about what you talked about during the last conversation. From here, you can provide new information, such as additions to your product or service line, case studies, relevant statistics, and more.



As cold callers, we've all experienced it – KDMs who aren't interested in a word you're saying and immediately hang up on you after you introduce yourself. Lead nurturing is also a crucial cold calling best practice because even if you've talked to rude KDMs in the past, sometimes they're no longer employed there or have taken a new position. In that case, you have the opportunity to connect with a new KDM to pitch your company's product or service. This is beneficial because everything you're pitching them is new information and you can treat them as a new prospect. More often than not, they'll be more receptive to learning about your company and what you have to offer them.

8 Connect With Key Decision-Makers Through Other Platforms

While cold calling is typically the preferred sales method, sometimes it's difficult to get in touch with KDMs. Since many businesses are working remotely these days, it's crucial that you reach out to them through other communication channels, including:

Email

When paired with cold calling, cold emailing is an effective way to nurture relationships with prospects. As mentioned previously, KDMs are busy people who typically wear many hats. Since they're not always at their desk to answer phone calls, you can send them an email with a general overview of the products or services your company provides.



Sending sales emails is also significant to your B2B sales strategy because you can design and craft messages that align with their wants and needs. In addition to typing copy in an email, you can also attach relevant sales enablement materials like videos, brochures, infographics, and sell sheets. These marketing collateral assets are beneficial because they're visually appealing and increase the likelihood of a prospect reaching back out to you.



LinkedIn Connections

Sending LinkedIn connections is a much more personal approach to B2B marketing and sales. LinkedIn is designed to be a social media platform connecting professionals in similar industries. By taking advantage of its unique capabilities, you have the opportunity to extend your relationship with high-quality leads in the sales pipeline.

When sending a LinkedIn connection to a prospect, it's essential to introduce yourself with a message, so they understand why you're requesting to connect with them. For example, the message could read:

"Hey, [prospect name]! I'm always looking to connect with reputable [prospect job title] in [region you serve]. I'm hoping we can connect and learn from each other's successes. Let me know if there's anything I can do to help you and your business!"

After you send the LinkedIn connection invite and message, the prospect has the opportunity to view your personal and company LinkedIn profiles. If they're interested in learning more about you and your company, they can accept your connection invitation and respond with any questions they may have. Even if they accept your invitation and don't reach out, you still have the opportunity to message them new and relevant content, like website pages and blog posts.



Looking To Maximize Your Sales and Marketing Strategy?



B2B Appointment
Setting



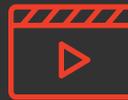
Website Design
and Development



Marketing
Collateral



SEO
Services



Video
Production



Salesforce
Consulting

Abstrakt Marketing Group is a leading B2B lead generation company. We collaborate with growing companies across the United States to generate high-quality business leads. To learn how our sales and marketing specialists practice outbound and inbound lead generation, contact us today!