



Direct Prospecting

In any business it's best to source new business in a variety of ways. Gaining warm referrals will generally reduce the sales cycle, but will leave you dependent upon the referrer for the types of prospects that you're referred to.

Conversely, Direct Prospecting, or cold calling, will probably have a longer sales cycle but does have the advantage of strategically targeting specific prospects.

We believe that strategically targeting prospects that best fit your business profile will ensure that you gain full benefit from your efforts.

STEP 1 – Define your target market: (could include)

- Size
Turnover £ p.a.
Profitability
Number of staff
- Industry
- Location
- Growth potential
- Other issues relevant to your business, such as:
 - ✓ Specific product offerings
 - ✓ Commonality of customer base
 - ✓ Potential needs of the prospect
- Degree of certainty that they have a need for your product offering

STEP 2 – Complete your prospect list:

In putting together your prospect list, set up your target market in terms of your ideal client. Be disciplined in only putting prospects on your list that fit all of your criteria.

When you've completed your first list you might want to relax one or two of your criteria and create a secondary prospect list. Then relax more if you need to and create further lists.



In this way you can create say Gold, Silver and Bronze prospect lists. You should then spend the bulk of your prospecting time on the Gold prospects because you know that when you're successful in making them a client, they're exactly the sort of client that you're looking for!

Be sure to constantly refine your prospect list. Drop those prospects whose circumstances may have changed or who, for whatever reason, don't seem that attractive to you anymore. Likewise, always be on the lookout for fresh names to add to your list.

STEP 3 – Research prospects:

Just because you're calling your prospect cold, doesn't mean you have to be cold in terms of your knowledge of them. There are many ways in which you can learn about your prospects and these can include:

- Websites. Most companies have a website today and public companies will post their annual reports and financials on their websites.
- Going to specific industry sites, chambers of commerce or associations.
- Social Media. Start following your prospect on Twitter, try to engage with them. Look for key people on LinkedIn. Do they have a Facebook page?
- Calling their Head Office to get specific names, titles and contact details.
- Gaining information by 'shopping' public outlets. This applies to say retail chains, financial services organisations and the like.
- Learning as much as you can about the business of your prospects, before you make the first call.

Remember to refine your prospect list from the information that you obtain. Prospects may be more, or less, attractive to you after you've learned a bit about them, so move them through your Gold/Silver/Bronze system as may be appropriate.



STEP 4 – Contact them!

Start contacting your prospects. Some people like to write or email before they call, whereas others like the call to be their first contact.

Research suggests that a prospect spends less than 15 seconds deciding if what you have to say is important enough to listen to you. To give you the best chance of success in your call, you need to develop a **Purpose** and **Benefit** statement:

Purpose – Why you're calling

Benefit – What's in it for the customer

Purpose – "I'm calling to introduce myself and Hawthorn Business Group. We'd love to come and spend say 45 minutes with you to..."

Benefit – "...help us to fully understand your business to see how we can help you grow your sales revenue."

How the conversation develops from here depends upon the response of the prospect. Don't try to sell anything over the phone, your objective should be to get a meeting with the prospect.

The key to success in this type of calling is to engage the prospect in conversation and respond to specific things that he or she may say.

Some tips for Direct Prospecting:

- ✓ Complete your research away from your cold calling time. Put time aside specifically for Direct Prospecting calls.
- ✓ Call in batches. No one call is make or break.
- ✓ Be persistent in getting to your prospect. It can take many attempts to even talk to your prospect. If you give up after 3 attempts you'll never talk to anybody!



- ✓ Get yourself in the right mood to make the calls. Think positive thoughts. Possibly listen to your favourite piece of music.
- ✓ Make your voice smile. Stand up and be businesslike.
- ✓ Don't take rejection personally. Everyone's busy and it may be that you're simply calling at the wrong time. Get your prospect's agreement to call back at a more convenient time.
- ✓ Stay in control of next steps. Don't rely on the prospect to call you back, because they won't.

One final thought...

If you think you can't... you'll be right

If you think you can...you will!