
The Power Of Permission-Based Prospecting

by BILL BROOKS

If you're like me, I prefer to look for products, shop for suppliers, and make buying decisions when I am inclined toward having a need, interest or desire to do so. In fact, I'll bet the last thing you purchased for business or pleasure fit that scenario, too.

Unlike the traditional and outdated practice of cold calling (often rationalized as "warm calling" by desperate sales managers) or manipulative networking "opportunities," our concept of Permission-Based Prospecting is one based on the principle that prospects are more likely to step up and be more interested in receiving a sales presentation when it is their idea to do so.

The secret is to obtain the most relevant data related to the segment of the market into which you want to sell your product or service. This is best gained through the use of demographics, psychographics, lists, trade show leads, association membership rosters, standard rate and data listed brokers — and more. These prospects should be the ones who most closely resemble the profile of your most profitable and high-margin customers.

Using Key Information

This data is only valuable if it contains certain key information. Without this important data, you will not have sufficient tools to attack your market intelligently. Here's a checklist of the information you'll need:

- Name
- Title
- Organization
- Mailing address
- Phone number
- Fax number
- E-mail address

Equipped with this information, you can now mount your personal prospecting campaign along a series of fronts. These include:

- Direct mail
- Newsletters
- Phone
- Free offers
- Broadcast e-mail

- Special reports
- Broadcast fax

Armed with these tools, you need to understand three very essential concepts:

- Most (if not all) responses from your prospects will occur sometime after the third contact.
- You must not bother or badger prospects. Instead, provide them with valuable, usable, profitable information with every contact. Give them a chance to respond to your offer via e-mail, return

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fax, phone or mail. Make your offer free, risk-free, and be sure it is of significant help to them.

- You will have seven seconds to attract their attention with your contact. Therefore, the key to the whole approach is the headline of your contact (not your logo, a friendly "Dear Prospect" or any other stuffy greeting).

Ideally, your whole approach should be to create an awareness of your unique ability to solve a problem, relieve a concern or resolve a dilemma that your prospect has. Once this has been raised, your next concern is to give them an opportunity to respond to your offer for additional information, specifically, to respond to you via e-mail, phone, fax or mail and say, "Yes, I'm ready."

Some examples? Imagine, for a moment, that you sell temporary help services. Your headline: "How to Eliminate Lost Productivity and Replace it With Imme-

diante Profits!" If you sell new, high-end vehicles: "We Can Help You Get the Car of Your Dreams at a Price You Never Dreamed of." These are, of course, merely suggestions. But you get the idea.

Seeking a Response

You want your prospect to say, "Yes, I'd like to learn more about how to do that!" You may want to have them respond and ask for your special report, booklet, audio or video, CD-ROM, etc. The bottom line? They are responding to you!

Always be sure to include your e-mail address, toll-free phone number, fax number and a fax-back form, and return address (with postage-paid envelope). A few more tips:

- Be sure your list is clean, up-to-date and complete.
- As prospects respond be sure

to remove them from your prospect list and add them to your active file.

- Be speedy, efficient and timely with your free offer.
- Remember to test the concept with a segment of your list first. Keep in mind that if a concept works with 100 people, it will work with 1,000.
- Continue to contact your list with postcards, letters, reports, e-mail, broadcast faxes, and do so with the promise of valuable, helpful information that they can obtain free of charge. Once you get responses, repeat your effort with very little modification to more and more prospects.

I don't know about you, but this certainly beats the way I was taught to prospect years ago. It is far more scientific and a lot less painful on the feet and the ego.

The advent of user-friendly, cost-effective technology has made all of this possible. And it has done so within a very short period of time. Software, computers and the explosion of data base management have now given salespeople a great opportunity and some great challenges. I urge you to take that challenge. Your income and long-term career success depends on it.

[Editor's note: Readers of this article are cautioned to make themselves knowledgeable regarding recent Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rulings regarding the proper/legal use of faxes and e-mails.]

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