

Warming Up Cold Calls



OR...

*How to Get Your Foot
in the Door Without
Getting It Crushed*



Brian Jeffrey

Somewhere in this world there are seven or eight salespeople who really enjoy making cold calls. The rest of us would rather stand under a cold shower, ripping up \$100 bills. This ebook is for the tens of thousands of us who hate — and sometimes fear — making cold calls.

Enjoy the read.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian J". The signature is stylized and cursive.

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by Brian Jeffrey

Somewhere in this world there are seven or eight salespeople who really enjoy making cold calls. The rest of us would rather stand under a cold shower, fully dressed, ripping up \$100 bills. This booklet is for the tens of thousands of us who hate—and sometimes fear—making them.

Why do so many of us dislike the idea of making cold calls? Probably because it isn't something that comes naturally to us. As one successful salesperson put it:

"I felt that making cold calls was like coming to dinner at someone's house without being invited. Just showing up and saying I'm here for dinner. My mother had raised me to be polite and a lot of the things I thought salespeople did were impolite, like cold calling."

Well, Virginia, you're not alone. A lot of salespeople feel that way. And as long as we continue to feel this way about colds calls, we're going to dread and avoid them. We have to change our attitudes and perceptions.

Let's face it, cold calls can make you anxious. That's because you put yourself on the line, you take a chance, you expose yourself to rejection. Ninety-five percent of salespeople don't make cold calls for the same reason they don't ask for the business (close the sale). They're afraid of rejection, afraid of getting a "no." Handling rejection is hard to learn and some of us never do learn to cope.

We must constantly remind ourselves that a "no" doesn't kill, it just hurts. We also need to remind ourselves that the salesperson who gets the most noes, also gets the most yesses.

There *are* salespeople who enjoy making cold calls. They're usually the ones who enjoy the thrill of the chase. However, once they've opened the door, they tend to lose interest and often fail to close the sale or service the account.

The rest of us are faced with the challenge of making cold calls—if we want our business to grow. Unless you're in a business where you're handed a stack of hot leads each day, you need to constantly find new prospects to replace the ones who die, who no longer need your product or service, or who are wooed away by your competition (who probably made a cold call!).



Devote certain hours in your week to prospecting only.

Cold calling is part of prospecting. A recent study in the U.S. showed that a salesperson's income is directly related to the person's knowledge and ability to prospect. In the highly competitive financial planning field, the leaders of the pack realize that the ability to cold call is crucial in the early stages of their careers. Successful high income real estate agents are the ones who proactively seek out listings (cold canvassing) rather than just sell properties others have listed.

What about the leaders in your field? Find out what part cold calling plays in their success and then decide how successful you want to be. Assuming that cold calling is going to play a part in your long-term success no matter what business you're in, here are some tested ideas that work.

Expect "No"

Each industry has its yes/no ratios. In some industries, insurance for example, you might get 50 to 100 noes before you get a yes. A few industries (you should be so lucky) get as low as four to eight noes for every yes. Find out what the yes/no ratio is for your business and if no one can tell you, take on the project of determining it for yourself.

Keep records on each call. Make a chart and record the result of each call you make. If you make cold calls over the telephone, note the number of busy signals, no answers, and wrong numbers as well. A project of this nature will give your cold calling an added purpose and make the job a bit easier.

Your yes/no ratio will depend upon the type of product or service you're selling, the quality of the lead or list you're working with, and your ability to capture the prospect's interest early in the call. Obviously, the more popular your product or service and the better the quality of your lead list, the more yesses you'll get.

You may not be able to control the quality of the product or service or the quality of the lead list, but you can sharpen your ability to get past the "not interested" stage by fine-tuning your ability to warm up a cold call and capture the prospect's interest early in the process.

However, no amount of warming up cold calls will eliminate hearing the word "no." The techniques in this booklet will help you minimize the number of "noes" you'll get.

LEARN TO GET REFERRALS

If you never want to make a cold call again, learn to get referrals. A referral will result in a warm call. Even a mild referral will do the job. Just having permission to use a person's name will warm up a cold call.

Studies have shown that a referred lead is 15 times more likely to do business with you than a cold call prospect. The problem is that too many salespeople don't or won't ask for referrals. We'll take a look at how to ask for referrals a bit later but, first, let's look at the right way and the wrong way to use referrals.

The wrong way is to launch into the opening the usual way: "Hello, Mr. Prospect. My name is John Sayles with Best Value Corporation. Bill Friend suggested I give you a call."

By the time you've gotten his attention, the prospect has already decided that you're a salesperson and is getting his "I'm not interested" excuses ready.

The right approach is to begin with the name the prospect will recognize best and that's probably the name of the referrer:

"Hello, Mr. Prospect. Bill Friend suggested I give you a call and I promised I would. I'm with Best Value Corporation. My name's John Sayles. Bill felt I may have something of interest to you."

Within the first five words you've used the prospect's name and a name of someone he knows, both of which are guaranteed to get his favourable attention. Notice the words, "...and I promised I would." They establish you as a potentially reliable person who keeps his promises.

So, if you never want to make a cold call again, use referrals. The problem is that most salespeople don't deserve referrals!

Earning Referrals

Let me repeat that last observation: Most salespeople don't deserve to get referrals. Why? Because they do nothing to earn them.

Too many salespeople are like waiters. You know the ones. They show up at your table to take your order, deliver it and then appear once during the meal (when your mouth is full) to ask how you're enjoying it. They reappear again to clear off the table, and then one last time to deliver the bad news (the bill). For this they expect a 15 percent tip! Simply because they did their job—no more, no less.

Some salespeople simply do their job—no more, no less—and then expect the customer to be eager to provide them with the names of hot prospects.

Dreamers!



Earn referrals before you ask for them.

Law of Give and Take

Use the Law of Reciprocity which states the more you give someone, the more he or she wants to reciprocate. The best way for a satisfied customer to reciprocate is to give you more business; the second best way is to give you referrals.

So the first step in earning referrals is to make sure you provide service that is above and beyond your customer's expectations. Don't be fooled by the simplicity of this concept. It takes a real effort to develop a personal customer service plan that makes you stand out over others in your field.

Once you've developed a plan, expect to spend the rest of your sales career making it work for you. The referrals will quit coming when you quit being better than your competition.

Ask and Ye Shall Receive

Help your customers exercise the Law of Reciprocity by asking them to reciprocate. Ask for referrals.

A study done for the Securities Industry Association showed that 86 percent of surveyed clients would recommend their broker to their friends, but only 12 percent said they had ever been asked.

Don't be afraid of being turned down. You can minimize the chances of getting "I can't think of anyone" by asking the right way and at the right time. Two "right times" are after your customer has acknowledged that you've been going out of your way to be of value to him, and after you've just provided another above-and-beyond-the-call-of-duty service to your client.

Let's assume your client has just thanked you for something you've done for him. You can say something like this:

"Thanks, Bill, I appreciate the fact that you notice the things I do for good clients such as yourself. There's one thing you can do for me in return. If you could provide me with the names of one or two people, like yourself, who could benefit from my service, I'd really appreciate it."

Or perhaps you've just done another extra service for your client. You can say something like this:

"Bill, I hope that this service is of value to you. (Wait for a response.) If it is, there's one thing you can do for me in return. I'd like to be of value to even more people. If you could give me the names of one or two people, like yourself, who could benefit from my service, I'd really appreciate it."

Know How to Ask

When asking for referrals from people who don't know the full extent of your offerings, the best approach is to describe your ideal prospect. Instead of simply asking, "Do you know anyone who might benefit from my services," try "I've found that the people who can benefit most from my services fit this description..."

Then paint a clear picture of who you can help the most, so the person can easily visualize your ideal prospect. After you paint the picture, ask, "Who's the first person (or company) that comes to mind?"

For example, if I was looking to get a referral for my services, I might say:

"Bill, I've found that the companies who can benefit most from my services fit this description. Typically, they're small to medium-sized businesses with two to 10 salespeople. Sales are not what they could or should be. While the salespeople may be good, management feels they could be doing better. The company has no sales tracking or forecasting system in place and realizes it's flying blind. They know sales could be improved but aren't sure how to do it. Based on that description, Bill, who's the first person who comes to mind?"

Simple? Sure it is, but when push comes to shove, most salespeople can't give a brief, distinct description of their ideal prospect. Can you? It's something worth working on.



You must be able to describe what your ideal prospect looks like.

Be Patient

No need to be pushy. Don't expect to get the names right then.

You might say to Bill, "If any names pop into your mind over the next few days, would you jot them down and I'll call next week. I'd really appreciate it." Now when you call back, all you have to ask is, "Did any names pop into mind?"

If you've earned the referrals, you'll get them. If not now, then later.

Show Appreciation

You can show appreciation for a referral with two simple gestures. The first is to send a thank-you note, or small gift if appropriate, thanking the person for the referral. The second is to let the individual know how the referral worked out. People like to know that you cared enough to actually do something with the referrals they give you.

The Power of Two

You'll notice that I only asked for one or two names, not 10. Why? Because, if every person to whom you gave exceptional service gave you the names of two people to whom you also gave exceptional service, by the time you repeated the process twelve times, you'd have over 4,000 clients.

Remember the TV commercial for shampoo where two people told two people who told two people, etc. The power of two can give you more prospects than you can reasonably handle.

Plan for Referrals

Select two, five, 10, or however many customers you want to cultivate. Decide what you can do to stand out over other salespeople in your field and then put your exceptional service program into action. When your clients recognize that you're truly better than the others, exercise the Law of Reciprocity by asking for two referrals.

Your objective is to get two good referrals from each of your key clients. Service these prospects the way you serviced your original clients and you'll build a solid business on nothing but referrals. Using these referrals will ensure warm calls.

USE LETTERS

If you're new to sales, you probably don't have enough satisfied clients to call upon to build a referral base. If this is the case, you can use letters to warm up cold calls – if you use them properly.

Like a lot of other salespeople, I used to think that the best way to warm up a cold call was to send a letter in advance. I now think of this as a *warning* letter, not a warm-up letter. I've warned the prospect that I'm going to call so she has time to think up several ways of saying, "No thanks."

In many cases, the prospect doesn't remember getting the letter.

Getting Remembered

A colleague of mine, Ian Cook of Vienna, Virginia, feels that paper doesn't cut it any more. It doesn't matter what colour of paper you use, people are getting immune to the warm-up letter. However, a gimmick along with the letter, *does* get remembered.

Ian used to market a simulation game titled "Gold of the Desert Kings." In his warm-up letter, he included a small plastic bag of sand. When he followed up his letter with a phone call, the prospect didn't always remember the letter but did remember the sand and it became a talking point.

A client of mine who used to sell advertising tried a similar approach. She included a small bag of grass seeds labeled “Instant Customers.” Her letter pointed out that customers don’t grow like grass but have to be cultivated with advertising, etc. It got her salespeople in the door.

Years ago, I developed a direct mail campaign where we mailed out a letter with a small plastic bag attached to the top of the letter. The bag contained two aspirins. The opening line said, “Does trying to find good salespeople give you a headache? Perhaps this will help.” The letter got read and remembered.

Sometimes you can be too clever. Do you have any idea what two aspirins look like after they’ve been crushed by going through the postal system? Does the word anthrax mean anything to you?

We had better luck with our “string letter.” That’s where we attached a piece of eye-catching red wool to the letter and pointed out in the text that our free offer had a “string attached to it.”

What can you do to get your warm-up letter read and remembered?

Making Paper Work

Ian Cook’s view about paper notwithstanding, I also developed a four-letter campaign for warming up a cold call. Each letter was linked by a provocative P.S. The prospect may have forgotten the first letter he received, but by the time the fourth letter got to him, our name usually was remembered.

We did this by mailing the letters four days apart and including something of value for the prospect in each letter. It’s critical that whatever you include with the mailing be of value or interest to the prospect and not just a piece of advertising material. Your letters will end up in the round filing cabinet if you just include information about your products or services.

The concept is simple. It’s a variation on the Law of Reciprocity. Show up at the door enough times with a gift without asking to be let in and perhaps they will invite you for dinner.

My Four-Letter Campaign

In my case, anyone who advertised for new salespeople was a prime suspect for my services. My first letter included a sample sales interview questionnaire form. The second, a sample *Sales Temperament Assessment* report. And the third, a sample issue of a newsletter we published for sales professionals. Each letter made references to the previous one and each has a teaser P.S. (For example: “P.S. – How much is a good sales idea worth? Watch for our next letter!”)



Say or do something that is of interest to the prospect.

In our last letter we said, “In order to see if we can be of any value to you and your organization, I’ve asked Paul Crozier, our sales director, to touch base with you. Will you please take a few moments from your busy schedule to talk with Paul when he calls?”

The coup de grace is the P.S. we put in this letter: “When Paul calls, be sure and ask him how you can get a FREE copy of our special report on *‘Sales Management Secrets for Increasing Sales Staff Productivity.’*”

Of course, the prospect got the free copy by giving Paul an appointment.

This method worked because each of the first three letters included something of interest to the prospect. Sometimes it worked so well that we got a call from the prospect before we’d sent all four letters out. Then our cold call became a call in.

Another reason why this method worked well for us is because we’d spent many hours crafting the letters. Don’t expect this method to pay off unless you put a lot of thought into it.

Timing is Everything

A word of caution: Don’t wait too long after mailing your warm-up letter to make your follow-up call. Three to five days maximum. Ide-

ally, your timing will be perfect and you'll call just after the prospect has finished reading your letter and it's fresh in his mind. If that ever happens, immediately run out and buy a lottery ticket because it's your lucky day.

TELEPHONE WARM-UPS

You can use a similar warm-up technique over the telephone. It doesn't work for every type of product or service, but it has been used with great success in the financial services industry. The technique consists of three phone calls:

1. The Introduction call.
2. The Reminder call.
3. And the Opportunity call.

The introduction call goes something like this:

"Hello, Mr. Prospect, I'm calling from Best Value Corporation, my name is John Sayles. I'm just calling to ask for your permission to call you if I were to come across an opportunity that might be of interest to you. Would that be all right?"

Once the prospect gives his agreement, end the call quickly and politely.

The reminder call is also short and sweet and occurs seven to 18 days after the first call.

"Hello, Mr. Prospect, I'm calling from Best Value Corporation, it's John Sayles again. I'm just calling to let you know I haven't found any opportunities that I feel would be of value and that I haven't forgotten about you."

Once again, keep the call short and professional.

The opportunity call occurs about five to 10 days later and goes something like this:

“Hello, Mr. Prospect, I’m calling from Best Value Corporation, it’s John Sayles again. I’m calling because I think I might just have something of interest to you. In order to see if my idea will be beneficial, would you mind if I asked a few questions?”

Now get on with the sale.

In order for the calls to succeed, they have to be carefully scripted and practiced. Don’t expect everyone to become instant customers but do expect a better chance of success if your primary job is selling over the phone and the approach is appropriate for your product or service.



If you plan in advance what you want to say or do, it’s more likely to happen according to plan.

Softening Up a Cold Call

While we might not be able to warm up a cold call, we can soften it. By soften, I mean take some of the pressure out of the approach.

Two things prospects are concerned about when they are approached by a salesperson is that they are going to be “sold” something and that the salesperson will take up too much of their time. One way to avoid creating this impression is to take a more conversational approach in the opening and remove their time concerns. Here are two sentences to include in your opening to help soften up a cold call:

- I know you weren’t expecting my call, so I won’t take up much of your time.
- The purpose of my call is to...

Let's use the Specialty Opening to illustrate this approach. Here's the format:

1. Introduce your company and yourself.
2. "We specialize in..."
3. "I know you weren't expecting my call..."
4. "The purpose of my call..."
5. Ask permission to ask questions.

Example:

"Hello Mr Prospect. I'm with the Best Value Corporation. My name is John Sayles. **We specialize in** helping grocers reduce the amount of spoiled produce they dispose. **I know you weren't expecting my call, so I won't take up much of your time. The purpose of my call is to** find out how much of a concern spoilage is to your company and determine if it would be worth your while to take a look at some of our material. Do you have a few moments to talk?

Here's a slightly shorter version:

"Hello Mr Prospect. I'm with the Best Value Corporation. My name is John Sayles. **We specialize in** helping grocers reduce the amount of spoiled produce they dispose. **I won't take up much of your time. The purpose of my call is to** find out how much of a concern spoilage is to your company and determine if it would be worth your while to take a look at some of our material. Do you have a few moments to talk?

Voice Mail Hell

The telephone is playing an increasingly larger part in selling. Whether you're trying to get an appointment or actually selling your product or service over the telephone, you must first get through to the decision-maker. Some people used to hide behind their secretaries. Now they have the wonders of voice mail to shield them from salespeople. Our job is to either get them to come out from behind the voice mail wall or find a way to get around it.

Getting Them to Call Back

There are three main reasons why people don't return calls:

- They don't know who to call because you spoke too fast and they couldn't make out your name and/or number.
- They think they don't need (or want) to talk to you.
- You didn't give them a strong enough reason (benefit) to call you back.

The key to getting a call returned is to leave a tantalizing message that causes the person to say, "Hmmm, I'm interested in hearing more!" Here's how to do it:

1. Get the person's immediate attention by using his or her name first.
2. Identify yourself, giving the company name first.
3. Speak a bit louder and a bit slower than normal. This counters the natural tendency to speed up our rate of speaking when we're talking to a mechanical device.
4. Present the person with a benefit statement. Mention ideas that might be of interest to the individual. Don't talk about yourself or your product. Give them a reason to call you back.
5. End the call with your name, company, and phone number. Speak slowly and clearly.

6. State the best time to reach you.
7. Repeat your name and phone number slowly and clearly as the very last thing. Don't make the person go back to the beginning of the message to get this vital information. Remember, people can't return your calls if they can't make out your name and number.

Example:

"Hello, Mr. Prospect. I'm calling from the Best Value Corporation. My name is John Sayles. Our company specializes in helping grocers reduce the amount of spoiled produce they dispose. Depending on how you're handling this area now, we may have some ideas that could help reduce your losses. To determine if these ideas are of any value, I'd like to ask a few questions about your current situation. Would you please call John Sayles, Best Value Corporation, 555-1234. The best time to reach me is this afternoon after three or tomorrow morning before ten. Again, that's John Sayles, 555-1234. Thanks."

To get your calls returned, you must give people a strong reason to do so — a reason that's important to *them*. The key is to be prepared with a benefit statement before you pick up the phone.

Here's a technique you can use if you have a *genuine* referral:

"Hello, Mr. Prospect. A mutual acquaintance suggested I give you a call and I promised I would. I'm with the Best Value Corporation. My name is John Sayles. Would you please give me a call at 555-1234. The best time to reach me is this afternoon after three or tomorrow morning before ten. Again, it's John Sayles, 555-1234. Thanks."

The prospect will almost always call back to find out who the mutual acquaintance is and why he or she suggested you call.

Self-Motivation Technique

Here's a technique I learned from a couple of folks in the financial services industry. These individuals kept excellent records of the number of calls they made over an extended period of time. When they divided their income by the number of calls they made, they discovered that every time they made a call, they made \$20 to \$24.

It didn't matter if no one answered, if they got a wrong number, or if they got a busy signal. On the average, they made \$20 to \$24 every time they dialed the phone. One person used to keep a stack of \$20 bills locked in her desk drawer. Whenever she needed some spending money, she would make a call or two and then pay herself \$20 a call.

This concept of rewarding yourself works. Find out what your hot button is and then allow yourself to push it after you've made the required number of cold calls. Your motivational hot button may be as simple as a hot chocolate sundae or treating yourself to some time off, or as complex as the purchase of that new "toy" you have your eye on.

Just make sure the rewards are in proportion to the number of cold calls. Don't be too easy on yourself.

DESTROY OUTLYING AREAS

Most salespeople's fear of cold calling stems from their concern about "screwing up" the sales call. So they put it off or don't do it at all. Remember, you can't lose a sale you don't have. You have to get a sale started before you can lose it. For some salespeople, the warm-up letter technique will help. For others, referrals can work. But what do you do if you can't use either of these techniques?

Here's a method I suggested to my salespeople when I managed a paging company. To help them get started, I'd tell them to select an outlying area and then go out and destroy it. I'd tell them to go to a part of town or to some accounts that we might never do business with again and to destroy them by screwing up cold calls.

In other words, I took the pressure off by giving them permission to screw up. What they came to realize was that, after the fourth or fifth cold call, it wasn't nearly as bad as they'd imagined and they hadn't screwed up at all.

Having salespeople do this in pairs works well. The team approach to cold calling allows each person to support and critique the other. If you try this approach, pick a supportive partner. Make sure you don't pair up with someone who pulls you down.

The same thing applies to making cold calls over the telephone. Pick people to call where it doesn't really matter if you make a sale or not. Use these calls to get over your call reluctance and fine-tune your cold calling techniques.

THE "A" WORD

The magic formula for doing cold calls and opening a sale is the same one for closing a sale:

$$\begin{aligned} &70\% \text{ Attitude} + 20\% \text{ Technique} + 10\% \text{ Skill} \\ &= 100\% \text{ Sold} \end{aligned}$$

I've seen more people fail because of their attitude than any other thing. Oh, they blame it on bad luck, wrong timing, no opportunity, or whatever. In actual fact, often it was their own attitude that kept them from what they sought.

A gentleman named Charles Swindoll summed it up neatly with his observations on attitude:

"The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude, to me, is more important than facts. It is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness,

or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home.

“The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people will act a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have — that is our attitude.

“I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it.”

What is your “attitude” towards cold calling?

A FINAL WORD

These are proven techniques that work, but they will work only if you do. That’s where your attitude comes into the equation.

You have to adopt and adapt them to suit your particular product, service or situation. Put in the time and energy to make them yours and then reap the rewards of warmer call calls.

Here’s a word of advice for those who procrastinate:

Making cold calls is like getting into a cold swimming pool slowly. The longer you take, the more painful it is. Don’t delay making your cold calls. Get them out of the way early in your selling day. Just jump right in.

Like it or not, cold calls are part of professional selling. Unless you’re selling \$10 bills for \$5, don’t expect new prospects to beat a path to your door.

Cold calls, warm calls, or whatever kind of calls, someone has to open the doors to new accounts.

Always remember the Rule of 45 that states 45 percent of all cold calls turn into a sale for someone. Better that “someone” be you rather than your competition.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Jeffrey is a sales management consultant and former sales trainer with over 40 year's experience. He's the author of *The Sales Wizard's Secrets of Sales Management*, *The 5-Minute Sales trainer*, 18 ebooks, and over 100 articles on selling and sales management.

Brian provides sales management consulting, coaching, and mentoring to business owners and sales managers. He has had many sales successes (as well as a few spectacular failures) and has learned what works, what doesn't, and why — information he readily shares with others.

Find out how Brian helps companies maximize their sales at **www.Quintarra.com**.

