



Selling IT Recruiting Services

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by Dan Fisher



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Cold Calling – a Dirty Word

Unless you were born into royalty, you are going to have to make cold calls in order to be successful in the field of recruiting. It's fascinating when marketers say "cold calling is dead", "cold calling doesn't work" and "stop cold calling." Who doesn't wish that their network was so extensive and so robust that they could always generate new business from referrals in their personal network?

The reality is, everyone's network "runs out" at some point. When that happens, what do you do? You either stop prospecting for new business or you cold call new prospects in order to develop new business. As IT services recruiters, we know that the industry is competitive, the internal political landscape of organizations is constantly shifting, and your top revenue-producing accounts today may not be with you forever. To counter these challenges we have to develop the skills and confidence to efficiently and effectively cold call. This article will tell you how.

Adjust Your Mindset

First, change your mental approach to cold calling. Don't approach cold calling with the goal of "making a sale" or "landing a meeting." If you do you are destined to fail and you will be in constant "objection handling mode." Besides, you don't want to be a transactional vendor. Selling IT professional services requires relationship building based on shared values and your ability to meet the prospects' specific needs. If the goal of the cold call is *not* to make a sale, then how can you get rejected? Eliminating the goal of "making a sale" or "landing a meeting" on a cold call will free you from the fear of rejection.

Stop Selling and Start Building Trust

Your customers and prospects are getting calls from competitors in the IT professional services industry each week. Typically, they cannot distinguish one vendor from the next because they all sound alike. They all lead with their product and/or service offering, which is a very "salesy" approach and a turn-off to just about any buyer. To be successful with cold calling you must first learn to sound different than your competition. Don't talk about your product or service. The focus of the call should be on the customer and what is important to him/her.

Your mission is simply to make the prospect feel comfortable in talking with you so you can find out if you're a good fit. Imagine an invisible wall between you and the prospect as you're talking with them on the telephone. Your goal for that call (and every cold call) is removing the



invisible wall so that he/she feels comfortable opening up and sharing information with you. Building trust is the first step.

Say the **opposite** of what the prospect expects you to say.

How to Build Trust with Your Prospect

To build trust, you start by displaying respect for their time and helping them share in control of the phone call. First, ask the prospect for permission to conduct the phone call and explain you're just trying to determine if you're a good fit or not. Tell them you won't talk about your product or service unless they ask you to. Throughout the phone call check in with the prospect by asking them, "Is it ok if we continue?" This makes them feel more in control of the call as well as demonstrating respect for them.

Put out the disclaimer that you understand that if they feel the discussion is a waste of their time, you will happily end the phone call. You must offer the prospect **multiple** opportunities to tell you to get lost or end the call. Think of it as reverse psychology. You want to say the opposite of what the prospect expects you to say. They expect you to be a walking brochure for your organization selling them all of the wonderful features and benefits of your service offerings. Instead, make the prospect feel like they control the call.

For example:

- "Hi, Jane: I know you were not expecting my phone call, have I reached you at a bad time?"
- "Jane, to be honest with you, I don't know if it makes sense for us to be talking. May I take one minute to explain why I'm calling and you can decide if it makes sense for us to continue the conversation?"
- "Jane, I recognize that our service offerings are not a fit for everyone. I'm simply calling to make that determination, to see if there may be some synergy between our experience and service offerings and your goals and objectives. Could we take a minute to discuss that?"

Stop Making Assumptions and Start Pre-Qualifying Prospects

One of the biggest mistakes recruiters make in selling IT professional services is that they assume every prospect is a good prospect. This is simply not true. There are plenty of prospects out there you don't want to do business with for a variety of reasons. So before you start selling, determine *with the prospect* if your two organizations are even a good fit for one another.

For example:

- "Tell me about the scope of your role and responsibility?"
- "Do you ever hire external consultants/contractors to help you complete your projects?"
- "What key projects are you currently focused on?"
- "How confident are you in your project team?"
- "What are some of the technical challenges you're trying to overcome?"



And don't assume you can help them until you have had a detailed conversation with them. There is nothing buyers hate more than sales professionals who try to impose their product or service on them without knowing anything about their business.

Summary

The goal of the initial cold call is to build trust and discover whether they have needs you can truly meet – better than anyone else.

On an initial cold call you will often not have as long or as detailed of a conversation as you would like. That's fine: the goal is to build trust and discover whether they have needs you can truly meet – better than anyone else. If you can accomplish that then you will have better success setting up a specific date and time for a follow up call to talk in further detail. And that follow up call is now a warm call. Additionally, you will have differentiated yourself from the competition because you didn't go for the sale or impose your product or service on the prospect.

About The Author

As Managing Director of the Menemsha Group, Dan Fisher is a sales coach and trainer dedicated exclusively to working with professionals in the IT staffing industry. Dan also authored the MenemshaMethodology, the only proprietary sales methodology dedicated to selling IT staffing & consulting services. www.menemshagroup.com

