



From Cowardly to Courageous – How to Succeed at Cold Calling

by
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There it is. That darn phone! And you have to pick it up and call someone you don't know. You need to make some *cold calls*.

The first thing to know is this – the longer you put off picking up the phone and making the first call, the heavier that phone gets. Give it enough time and you'll swear it weighs 500 pounds when you try to lift it.

I've been skydiving for years. In the process of doing thousands of jumps and earning multiple world records, I've learned some valuable lessons about managing fear that apply to lots of things ... including cold calling. So, let me share some insights with you that I've reaped from all those skydives that will make you more successful at cold calling.

So, how do you get started? How do you overcome the understandable fear of cold calling? Here are the five simple steps.

Five Steps for Being More Successful Cold Calling

1. You Have to Believe in What You're Offering
2. See It From the Buyer's Perspective
3. Separate Yourself from the Inevitable Rejection
4. Accept the Fear – Then Move Through It
5. Keep Dialing

Step 1 – You Have to Believe in What You're Offering

You have to believe in the product or service you're offering and the organization and people who deliver it. You have to know you're selling something of value – something that will assist the person or organization you are calling.

If you are not sure of the benefits you're offering your prospect, you need to sit down and think about it. Ask yourself, "How will this person or their organization be better off if they buy what I am selling?" How will they sell more, save money, operate better, be happier, be more profitable – whatever the benefits are they'll enjoy.

This is vital! Do not bother going on to the next steps until you have this clear in your mind. You'll be wasting your time. You have to be absolutely convinced – deep down – of the value of your product or service.

Now, if you're stumped on this one, get some help. Ask colleagues or friends for their thoughts on the value you're offering. If you do all this and conclude there really is not much value in what you are offering ... move on! You will never be a success at selling something you don't believe in. And life is too short to spend your time doing it.

It's similar to skydiving. If you do not believe in yourself and your equipment, you have no business being in the plane – let alone in freefall. You owe it to yourself – and your customers – to only sell something you in which you truly believe.

Step 2 – See It From the Buyer's Perspective

When I was getting certified to take people for their first skydive, I was first required to put on the student harness and ride on the front of an experienced instructor – just like my students would. This was required because it is critical that I understand my student's perspective. Experiencing a jump from their perspective definitely made me a better instructor.

It is the same for cold calling. You have to put yourself in the buyer's shoes. So, in your mind, trade places with your prospect. Ask yourself, "What would make me say, *yes*?" And also ask yourself, "What would make me say, *no*?" You have to appreciate the buyer's perspective to effectively sell to them.

It will help to ask people you've already sold to why they said, "yes." What made the difference to them? You'll gain valuable insights that will help you better understand your prospect's perspective – and make you more effective.

Step 3 – Separate Yourself from the Inevitable Rejection

When you're cold calling, you will experience rejection. It's unavoidable. Here is the important thing to keep in mind: *It's not about you!* Your prospect is not rejecting *you*. They are rejecting the product or service you're offering.

They may just not need it right now. Or they may be so overwhelmed with challenges, they just can't focus on what you're offering and have to say. They're not rejecting you! They don't even know you.

Rejection is a part of life. So is occasional sub-par performance. I've walked away from many skydives very disappointed with my performance. But you have to shake it off and keep going. If I allowed my disappointment to get to me, I would eventually stop jumping. And that would deprive me of something I truly love.

It is similar with cold calling. If you allow the rejection to get to you, it will profoundly impact your effectiveness. When you get the "nos," the terse responses, or even the hang ups – you have to be able to say to yourself, "Oh well, their loss. I'm sorry they're not able to take advantage of the wonderful product or service I am offering. I am going to keep calling to find people who can" – and mean it.

Step 4 – Accept the Fear – Then Move Through It

No one likes being rejected or hearing "no." That's normal and okay. *It is easy to allow the desire to succeed lapse into a desire not to fail – which can then lapse into fear.*

Don't worry. Being fearful of rejection or failure is common and appropriate. What is important is that you not play games with yourself. If the fear is there, don't try to convince yourself it's not. Don't deny it.

Until you accept the presence of the fear, it's in charge. When you accept its presence and the fact that it is affecting your performance – you take most of the power away from the fear.

I've had to learn this lesson thoroughly in order to succeed as a Professional Exhibition Skydiver. If I had not learned to acknowledge and accept my fears, there is no way I could have successfully jumped into small landing areas on the middle of large cities or sporting events with audiences of over 100,000. (If you would like more information in this method of fear management, see the article called ***You Want Me to Do What? – Risking to Win*** at www.JimMcCormick.com.) So, accept that the fear is there and that you're experiencing it. Not doing so will hold you back.

Step 5 – Keep Dialing

You build momentum with each call. When you stop dialing, you lose it. Set things up so you have plenty of prospects to call before you get started. Do your research in advance. When it comes time to call, do it with a vengeance! The sooner you make the next call, regardless of whether it is a sale or not, the better. You build momentum. One sale will lead to another.

If the last call was not a success, it is even more important to pick up the phone right away. The longer you wait, the more likely it is to get to you.

Get Started

Cold calling will always be challenging. But you can make it more pleasant and be more successful at it by following these steps. Now get started. The sooner the better! It's time to leave the plane!

Jim McCormick is the Founder and President of the Research Institute for Risk Intelligence. His books include *Business Lessons from the Edge* (McGraw-Hill), *The Power of Risk* (Maxwell Press) and *The First-Time Manager* (AMACOM). More information is available at www.JimMcCormick.com.

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