

Starting relationships with a three-call approach to cold calling

Before someone chooses to work with you, they usually have to know you (at least a little); you need some kind of relationship. One frequently successful strategy for starting new relationships is to reach out directly to people who might want to know you. A cold calling process that includes a sequence of three carefully planned calls to each target can be a very effective approach for reaching out.

Strategies for Starting Relationships		
Attracting people	Reaching out to people	Working with others to find people or have them find you
Speaking Writing Public relations Website Blogging Social networking Sharing media that demonstrate your expertise	Cold calling Direct mail Conferences and meetings	Referrals Network of allies Formal strategic alliances

Cold calling process can start relationships

With cold calling, you will start a relationship with each person you call, even the ones you never talk with. The best frame of mind for cold calling is to think, “There are so many great people out there whom I could help, and this is an opportunity for me to start to get to know some of them.” You are not selling, just starting relationships.

Prospective clients are the typical audience for cold calls. You know they are busy, so don’t expect to reach them on a first call. Plan a campaign of three phone calls; make all three over a period of a few weeks, and plan to leave voicemails most of the time. For each call, use a script that highlights your relationship, provides some value to the recipient (or an offer of some value), and encourages them to call you back. Your overall goal is to start a relationship – because you want to start one (you’ll need to be prepared to maintain it too, but that’s a topic for another issue). Your cold calling goals are to begin to discuss their challenges, to help them if you can, and to communicate that you want a relationship even if there’s nothing they need from you right now.

In a 3-call campaign:

- The first call – introduce yourself and what you do for clients like them. Say that you’d like to talk briefly to understand their situation (with respect to the underlying issues that you typically address) and to see if

you might be able to be helpful to them. As in all voicemails, it's polite to leave your phone number at the beginning and the end.

- In the second call, refer to your previous call and what you said you do. Express that it's unfortunate that you've missed each other. Provide a little more information about your practice (your qualifications). You can also suggest the kinds of problems that can result from failing to address the issues you deal with. Then reiterate your interest in understanding their situation and being helpful to them, and provide your phone number.
- In the third call, you express regret for missing them, and then say something like, "If I don't hear from you, I'll assume that you are happy with how you are addressing the kind of issues I deal with and with the people who are handling them for you, and I won't call back for some time (e.g., six months)." You'll be surprised at how many people actually will call you back at this point – because they are interested but figured you'd just keep calling.

If (increasingly rare) the person has a human assistant who answers the phone, you can enlist their help in getting in touch with the person. Sometimes this assistant refers you to someone else in the organization. You can then contact them with an endorsement: "Mr. X's office suggested I talk with you about this".

Many people don't like making cold calls, and find it hard to ever get around to doing them. Some strategies that help include:

1. Carve out a regular time each week to cold call. Early in the morning and late in the afternoon are typically the best times to reach people (they have fewer meetings scheduled) so picking one or two days at those times can be most productive.
2. Cold call with a colleague. Two people I know who work together reserve a block of time for "power calling" together. They sit in adjacent offices with a shared commitment to spend an hour doing nothing but outbound calls – they don't check email; they don't take inbound client calls. The result is many more calls per hour and success.
3. Do other relationship building tasks too. A steady diet of cold calling is hard. Experience the benefits of strong relationships by making sure you also spend time maintaining existing relationships, which can be more immediately pleasant for many people.

And be prepared for when you actually get the person. It sometimes happens – they pick up their phone and they want to talk. So you need to be ready to throw away your voicemail script and begin your conversation (which will mostly be asking the right questions). Please see the June 2008 issue for some ideas about the kinds of questions you'll want to eventually cover. www.writesendtrack.com/news/

Something to try this week

Pick ten people you'd like to start a relationship with and get their phone numbers. Write three scripts -- one for a first call, one for a second, and one for the third call. (One side benefit is that you'll get a clear statement of what your practice is all about. Rehearse the first script a few times, until you know it well enough to say it without reading it (but keep it in front of you when you make the calls).

Then call the ten people, and talk with them or leave them messages. Then, one week later, rehearse and make the second calls. One week after that, make the third calls.

Remember -- you are starting relationships with new people -- and that's good.

What are these tips?

These monthly tips are intended to help professionals create more business and enjoy their work more. We focus on how to start relationships, how to build relationships, and how to convert those relationships into sales.

Can you answer my questions about business development?

We'd be delighted. Please send any questions you have to questions@bridgewellpartners.com and we'll do our best to help you out. Or call us at 312-863-3489. Or visit www.bridgewellpartners.com to learn more about how we coach and train professionals to be better at business development and to enjoy it more.