

Executive White Paper

Killer Prospecting

High-Profit Strategies to Find & Develop New
Business Utilizing Social Selling, Text, Email &
Telephone



The Sales Coaching Institute
PRODUCTIVITY TRAINING FOR SALES AND SALES MANAGEMENT

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Killer Prospecting - High-Profit Strategies to Find & Develop New Business Utilizing Social Selling, Text, Email & Telephone

Any business requires a constant influx of new clients, customers and sales opportunities. This is particularly important for a startup or a new business, but it is also critical to keep an existing business in a growth cycle and to keep a business relevant in today's hyper-competitive markets.

In many ways, a business that fails to continue to bring in new potential customers is a business that is already in a downward growth cycle. Simply holding your own in today's market and with increasing global competition means falling behind in your given industry or niche.

To keep a business in a growth cycle, developing a killer prospecting plan to bring in a constant flow of new Business to Business (B2B) customers and clients should be a priority. With a strategic way to make full and effective use of social media, texts, emails and telephone calls, you will maximize the generation of qualified leads that are the lifeblood of any sales team.

What is Prospecting in Business Terms?

Today, business owners are flooded with new terms for old and established practices. The buzz words tend to include branding and networking, both of which are critical.

Networking is developing a network or system of contacts in your business that provides the opportunity for referrals or direct sales. This is an essential part of business, but it is not the same as prospecting.

Branding, which is creating a unique presence in the market and an image or mental connection with your company and products in the mind of your customer is more directed to marketing. It is also important, but again it is not prospecting.

Think of prospecting in terms of actually harvesting the results of networking and branding. It's the action part of networking and branding and it is the single biggest factor in bringing in customers to a business and closing a deal. Networking can include a lot of different people in your business world; prospecting will focus in specifically on new prospects and obtaining additional revenue from existing customers.



Of course, some of the features of networking and prospecting are the same. They are both about developing relationships that create the environment to make a sale or a potential sale.

In the past, prospecting was done face-to-face, on the phone or through direct mail. Now, there are so many more options to consider to actively connect with potential customers and to build these relationships.

To help you to develop some killer prospecting strategies, it will be important to focus in on how each type of prospecting requires slightly different strategies and techniques no matter what type of sales you are in.

Social Selling

Social media is a great place to prospect. However, it is also a place where you can spend a lot of time making conversations and getting caught up in talking to people that are not qualified leads and are not going to make a purchase from your company at any point in time.

The key to social media selling is to be able to tailor your message and your time spent to the customers you want to attract. This may sound like an impossible task, but there are really some very easy techniques to master that will make your time online much more productive.

1. Choose Social Media Sites Wisely

This may seem obvious, but if you are a B2B sales professional don't waste time on Facebook, YouTube or Twitter as a prospecting option. They are great for social interaction with established customers, but they are not as effective in generating new prospects.

Instead, focus on LinkedIn as a key B2B prospecting site. Take the time to develop your personal profile and consider opening up a Premium account and consider the use of the fee LinkedIn Sales Accelerator service. This makes it much easier to InMail or communicate directly with those you want to connect to without all the issue of having to go through an invitation to connect.

LinkedIn premium account & Sales Accelerator enables you to search for people by profession, location, school, training, past workplaces or industry. This is a great tool to identify and reach out to just those who would be qualified leads.



2. Be Recognized as an Expert

Sites like LinkedIn, and to a lesser extent the other social media sites, give you a chance to really show your area of expertise and to be viewed as a Subject Matter Expert – (SME) and Trusted Advisor. If you are trying to sell to a particular company, watch what their executives are commenting on or posting and tailor your message and post to their areas of interest.

This is a highly effective way to accomplish two different goals. The first one is to get your name noticed and recognized as an expert or a creative thinker and problem solver. The second is to gain insight into how to approach that executive when you do make a call, send an email or make a connection through the site. It also prevents you from getting caught in the “Time Wasting Trap” and losing precious “Selling Time: crawling on non-productive social media sites.

Often when cold calling, you don't get access to the buyer or the decision maker. By using LinkedIn and your own expertise, you will have them approaching you through the discussion to your post. Of course, you will also be able to comment on theirs, building up that relationship to eliminate the cold call problem.

3. Solve Problems for Businesses

In addition to just commenting and posting, when your social presence is seen as helpful, positive and beneficial you are creating prospecting options and opportunities. Being able to assist others or make suggestions that are more than just fluff and are specific to your area of expertise and enhances your online brand and reputation.

Solving problems isn't about providing pat answers. It gives you the opportunity to make a phone call, schedule a meeting or send an email to create a direct communication. This is really prospecting at its best, turning an online contact into an opportunity to have a direct meeting and the chance to secure an appointment and potential face-to-face meeting that is tailored to solve the client's business problem(s).



4. Engage with Your Audience

One of the biggest mistakes people make when using social media to develop prospects is to see it as a passive activity. It has to be an active, interactive and engaging part of your prospecting plan to be effective.

Simply putting your profile up on the site and hitting like on a few posts is not going to build a relationship with your prospective clients. On the other hand, making a lot of random comments that are irrelevant, unhelpful or that may be taken as patronizing, negative or as if you are simply online to make connections and attempt to sell to individuals will also be counterproductive.

Be selective in the posts you choose to respond to and make meaningful, insightful and well-thought out comments. Avoid getting into areas of highly controversial issues that are more opinion than facts and research as this can potentially turn off or drive away potential customers.

Before hitting the send button on any post, take the time to read it again. Make sure it is what you want to say and that you are comfortable that it is exactly what you want others to read.

Schedule a set amount of time every day to get on your social media accounts and read, make comments and send messages. This should be scheduled the same way as cold calls or follow-up calls after meetings. By scheduling, you can also avoid the trap of getting caught up on social media sites and finding you have spent half a day online without following any type of structured plan for making connections.

5. Pay Attention to Details

Another critical aspect of locating prospects is to make sure each message contains accurate information. Avoid quoting facts and figures from untrusted or unvetted sources.

It is also important to check your spelling, grammar and punctuation with your posts. This gives your comments, articles and blogs a very professional and polished look. Nothing stands out more than obvious errors in the eyes of potential new customers. It is a good idea to write articles in Word or use a spell checker and then cut and paste into the social media site to catch these types of mistakes.



Text Messages in Prospecting

Text messaging is another valuable tool for prospecting, but just like any other type of contact it has to be relevant, timely and designed for the individuals receiving the text. SMS or text message selling has developed a bad reputation because of the way the technology is often misused.

The reality is that short, concise and relevant text messages are seen as favorable to most people. The additional value of being able to tailor or personalize the message quickly, easily and in a valuable way makes it perhaps the most under-utilized tool for prospecting.

The key to remember is that no one is going to want a large number of irrelevant or impersonal texts that are just hard sell types of messages. Remember, prospecting is about unearthing those hidden gems and determining the qualified leads, not in actually closing the sale.

To help in using this tool effectively, there is one very important factor to consider. Text messaging someone without any prior contact, which may be more correctly termed "cold texting" is going to be the least practical way to prospect. In a massive study of over 3.5 million records, Lead360 found that just under 5% of those cold texts became a conversion.

However, by making a phone call and a connection before sending the text, the conversion rate for the same message resulted in over a 100% improvement in the numbers.

The takeaway to remember is that text prospecting is a terrific tool after the initial contact. It is a way to give a short, friendly and personal reminder of the conversation, add a detail or make a suggestion to show the customer or client you listened and heard their information.

To boost your text prospecting, there are a few simple techniques that are easy to incorporate into your current practice. If you are not using SMS messages for prospecting at this time, these will also be effective ways to get started.

- Make the connection – don't assume your prospect will immediately connect your text to a conversation you had even a few days ago. Start business texts out with your name and the name of your business in the first line of the text. Also, make sure to draw the line between the dots so they understand you spoke before and what you spoke about.



It might look like:

Peter, this is John Smith at MyCompany. We spoke on Tuesday about the importance of pricing in bulk purchases of XYZ. I saw an article with more information for you about this option which can be found at www.bulkbuying.com or give me call at your convenience

- Don't use "text language" – this is a professional communication, so you want to keep it that way with prospects. Avoid using abbreviations such as RU for "are you" or adding any little smiley faces, emoji's or any other type of "cute" additions to the text message. Remember, not everyone is an avid texter and using even common abbreviations can be frustrating for the receiver to understand the message.
- Check for meaning – with short messages that are not more than 2-4 sentences it is easy for a message to come across as abrupt, hostile, sarcastic or even patronizing. Take the time to read the message before hitting send and make sure the message is clear and will not be misinterpreted or misunderstood.
- Watch out for autocorrect – autocorrect or auto-suggest features are great to speed up texting, but they can also result in some embarrassing and highly offensive messages. Keep in mind our phones "learn" our patterns of texting, so if you use the same app and phone for business as for personal texting you need to be very careful and proofread the message.
- Is it relevant? – before you send any text stop and think if you would be interested in the text if you were the prospect. This is critical as too many irrelevant texts will end up causing irritation and possibly even result in your number being blocked. Keep it relevant and keep it tailored to the specific individual to help to boost the personal connection.
- Don't sell – the goal of text messaging prospects is not to close the sale, it is to open it to their relationship with you as an individual so you can obtain a sales meeting. The most the prospecting text message should do is to ask for a meeting or a return phone call.



- Stay organized and on track – if you are following a sales process it will be essential to consider text messages as part of your contacts. This is a great opportunity to show your organization and professionalism by texting reminders of meetings, events, networking opportunities or confirmations of deadlines or other details. It is more practical for the prospect and less intrusive than phone calls.

Remember, text messages are short, relevant and to the point. They are one tool to use and not the only option. They should also be used after a phone call, returned email or meeting and not as an initial way to contact a prospect whenever possible.

Email Prospecting

Email prospecting, contrary to what you might have heard, can be a highly effective tool if used in the right way. The biggest problem with email is that most emails that are not from known contacts of the prospect are going to end up filtered in spam folders or simply deleted with other sales emails before they are read.

The key is in developing those initial emails for prospects that are engaging, interesting and capture the attention of the prospect right from the subject line. There are some simple guidelines and ideas you can use to boost the interest factor for your prospecting emails and take them from boring and deleted to engaging and eye-catching.

The Subject Line

The most important factor in email prospecting is to get the prospect to open the email. Even if the body of the email is perfectly worded and informative, if they don't open the email, it is irrelevant how good the actual content may be.

Writing a subject line is often the most challenging aspect of email prospecting. It has to be interesting and pique curiosity to open the email, but it also has to be relevant to the content. Bait and switch types of subject lines and emails will get your address blocked or sent directly to spam.



The Sender

If you are sending from a business account make sure it has your name as the email sender, not an email from your department or that lists your position. For example, an email from sales@xyzcompany.com is not personal and looks like a sales letter. On the other hand, the email from johnsmith@xyzcompany.com looks more personal and less like an overt sales email.

Keep it Short and Concise

Think of the initial and later contacts with your prospects by email as you would an elevator speech. You only have a limited amount of time to tell them what you need them to know.

The key to getting emails read is to make them readable. Try to keep it to one or two short paragraphs that create interest. Don't go into the history of the company, your personal experience or a long explanation of the industry. Instead, create a message that is personal, relationship building and not a hard sell message.

Avoid adding a lot of graphics, links or multimedia elements to the email. These can make emails slow to load on some devices and result in a busy professional simply going on to the next in the very long list in his or her inbox. Most business professionals receive several hundred emails per day and growing, so your email communications need to be creative, short & concise.

Make it Personal

Do your research about the prospect and the company. Did he or she recently win a big contract, open a new office, win an award, participate in a community event or any other personalized accomplishment or achievement?

This is the starting point for the email. You can also talk about more personal issues if you know the prospect is a big football fan or works for a local charity, all good options to get in a meaningful and personal first sentence.

Another great option is to ask a question of the prospect that allows her or his expertise to shine. This is only effective if you do your research and know the individual's interest or expertise. It also has to come across as genuine and not a gimmick or as if it is patronizing.



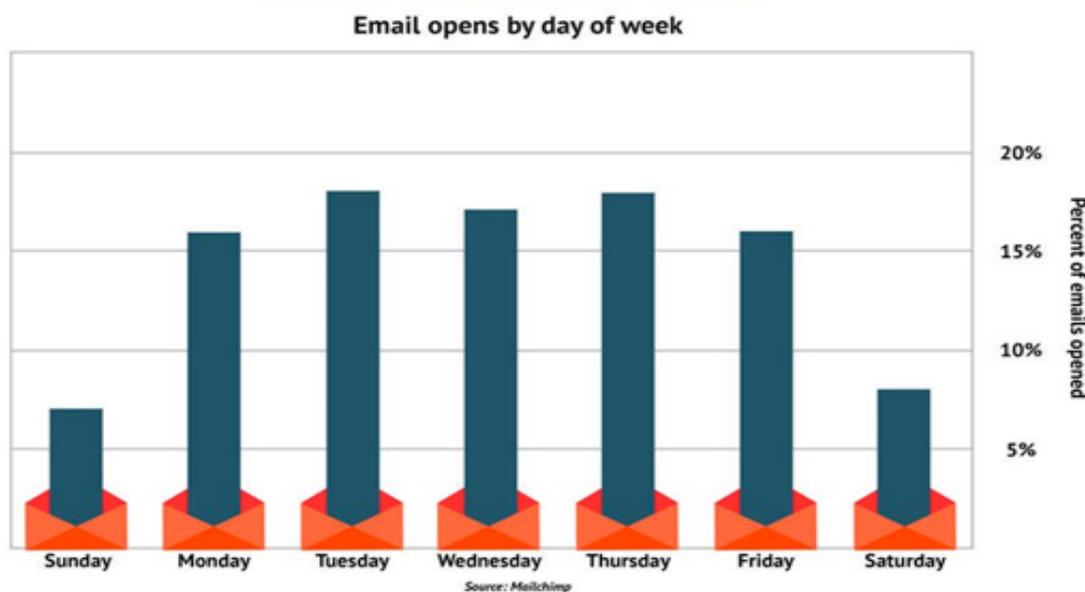
It is a good idea to invest in email analytics software. This is offered through many different software programs. It will allow you to track when your emails are opened, if the links enclosed are clicked and if the email was deleted without reading. This can be helpful in refining what works and what doesn't work within your specific industry and geographic area for sales.

Mix it Up Email Types

Sending different types of emails in different drops is a very successful approach and strategy. A suggested approach that I recommend is to send an HTML two weeks out, a plain text email seven days out, and then an HTML email again on the day of the event/call to action, e.g. webinar, newsletter, etc. This can give the impression that your company/event is much larger and more significant than it may appear. This structured email campaign and process can also make it more likely that your targeted audience will read one of the emails since one is different from the others in the campaign.



Best Days and Times to Send Emails



Get Most Opens / Reads

When: In the afternoon between 12 NN - 4 PM

The sweet spot between **lunch time** and your **afternoon break** is the **best time to send your message** if your goal is to achieve the most opens. This is because at this time of the day, your recipient gets a median number of email messages and has time to open and read messages arriving in his inbox.

The illustration features a central white envelope icon with a red flap, containing a white document with horizontal lines. To the left is a red circular icon with a white bar chart showing an upward trend. Below the envelope are a yellow speech bubble, a red circular icon with a white person silhouette, and a yellow circular icon with a white @ symbol.



Telephone Prospecting

While the most traditional method of killer prospecting on this list, communication by telephone is still a critical part of generating qualified leads for any business. Most sales professionals will tell you that cold calling is their least favorite part of the job, but there are ways to boost the conversion rate of cold calls and turn those conversations into real prospects.

The advantage that the phone conversation has over other prospecting methods discussed is the immediate person to person connection. You can hear his or her voice and he or she can hear yours. This allows you to "read" the tone, cadence and even volume to make subtle adjustments in the conversation to keep engaging the prospect.

This isn't possible with the other options as they are asynchronous forms of communication. Once you sent a social media post, tweet or message, a text or an email is sent, there is no way to modify the message based on the immediate feedback from the reader.

With that in mind, here are some top tips for prospecting by telephone. These are simple and easy to follow through on with just a slight change to your current practices for many top sales professionals.

- Never "cold" call again – there is no reason ever to make a call where you don't know something about the person on the other end or about his or her company. Do your research online and have a few key points in your notes to help you to immediately personalize the conversation to at least the company if not the buyer.
- Ask questions – by asking questions of the prospect rather than immediately diving into "sales mode", this helps you to establish trust and rapport. Trust and rapport precedes any and all sales prospecting activities. In addition, asking questions and thinking about the match between the prospect and your product or service rather than the sale you come across as genuine and interested in the prospect. This is very different from going in to make an initial call and close a sale in the same conversation.



- Make other connections first – another way to avoid the dreaded cold call is to connect with the individual using social media before calling. This is often part of the research phase for the sales professional. It provides you with a way to connect with the prospect and highlights his or her experience or expertise. For example, starting with a question like, " I liked your blog/post/tweet on XYZ and wondered if you could expand a bit more on what you meant by...." is much more effective than a standard cold call script greeting.
- Be punctual – if you have connected through social media or even by email and have set a time to call, think of it just like a business meeting in person. You need to make the call on time or just ahead of the time set. Don't be late or don't wait to last minute to find numbers and notes. Being organized and on time helps you to focus and be calm, confident and prepared before they ever pick up on the other end. Remember, being on time for an appointment at 2:00PM does not mean arriving at 1:55PM. On time means getting there at 1:30PM, observing the lobby and obtaining additional data on the company to be better prepared for the meeting.
- Be consistent – keep your message consistent between what you say on the phone and what you have said in emails or through social media. Remember, you are building rapport with prospecting and any differences in information may be seen as dishonesty or attempts to bait and switch by savvy buyers or even those new to the job.
- Be yourself – everyone has a natural personality style. There have been endless studies about the most effective sales style, but if it isn't natural for you, then it is going to come across as fake, phony or as if you are acting a role. Instead of trying to be someone you are not, maximize the skills, tools and gifts you have by incorporating your natural style. Work within the sales process your company has developed, but make it work for you.

As with email, text and social media prospecting, keep your phone calls short and limit giving the prospect a massive information dump during the conversation. Instead, see this as a way to learn more about how your products and services will solve a problem or fill a need they are experiencing.



Always end the phone conversation with a commitment for a follow-up phone call, email or meeting. You can offer to send more details, direct them to some relevant and important content or meet with them for further discussions. This is done a personal, professional and respectful way and should not be seen as overly sales oriented and aggressive by the prospect.

Schedule Prospecting Activities

Ideally, using all forms of prospecting with all of your potential clients is the best option. Keep notes on which clients respond best to the various methods and how much time you spend on the different options. This will help you to be more effective and efficient as you move forward.

Remember, just like any type of business prospecting, you have to adjust your methods of making contacts based on the interests of the different clients. It is very helpful to keep records of how each individual response to your attempts to develop a business relationship.

Noting if he or she is most likely to respond to a text, email or phone message or perhaps a message through social media can help you to streamline your communication efforts in the future. Often there is a transition from the more impersonal social media or email contact to telephone and text message as the relationship builds and trust is developed.

Never become discouraged if the first few attempts at connecting with prospective clients and customers isn't successful. Try different options, reach out with multiple prongs of communication and continue to focus on the most effective strategies to optimize the response. Utilize your companies CRM tool(s). If the company does not have one, invest in your own. There are several robust and inexpensive Cloud-based CRM programs available today, such as Pipedrive, FreshSales, Zoho and Sugar.

Learning how to be effective at prospecting for new clients and customers is a process. It is not something that can be achieved by attending a seminar or reading a sales blog. Rather, look towards developing these goals as a long-term plan that continues to evolve. Set goals, learn more about the different options and also stay on top of how others in the industry are using these tools to maximize the growth of their potential customer base.



Finally, schedule time for prospecting on a daily basis. This is essential as it is the only way to keep bringing in new customers and clients to a business and to keep sales growing. It is also the way to become an expert at killer prospecting, boosting your sales and continuing to improve your sales practices.

