

Gaining Access to Power

Cold Calling *does* work – if you know how to call

By **Marie Warner**

As seen in...**SalesVantage.com**

No sales rep seems to enjoy the critical task of prospecting - especially cold calling - although everyone grudgingly acknowledges the need to dedicate time each week to the critical task.

Will sales reps cold call - and learn to like it? Yes, if shown that cold calling is effective in gaining access to decision makers and Key Player executives. The sales person needs to learn to approach cold calling differently -- and should use cold calling to cultivate an *internal referral* and not to initially call the Key Player. Why not?

A survey* of senior executives was conducted to determine under what circumstances they would respond to a contact from an unknown salesperson. Responses showed that *eighty percent (80%)* of senior executives are unlikely to ever respond to an inbound sales call. Not great odds. Other than golf, not many people enjoy an effort that yields such disappointing results.

The executives surveyed further indicated that the most likely way to gain access to them is a *referral from someone inside their own company*. Eighty-four percent (84%) will always or usually respond to an internal referral.

A prospecting technique that has been shown to have **84% effectiveness**? What sales person wouldn't use it? -- once they are shown how to use cold calling to generate internal referrals.

I conduct Cold Call Seminars and perform real-time Cold Call Coaching, and the most common error made by reps is the *lack of a plan* for a successful calling session. Before calling the targeted Key Player, I coach the rep to intentionally call *laterally or one level lower*, as well as to *non-key players* within that company.

The result of cold calling with such an approach is this: The rep can make *each cold call* productive. Knowledge - if not access - can be harvested from every conversation. After only a couple calls, the sales person will have documented many pages of useful notes from these "staging" conversations within the target company, and, as a result, will be much more knowledgeable about the prospect. This achievement in itself makes cold calling much more satisfying. And the sales person becomes increasingly confident as they polish their cold calling abilities.

Selecting from the gathered notes, the rep crafts a unique script. Yes, the rep should prepare a written script for the call to the targeted Key Player, and should practice that script until it sounds fluid but not "scripted." This script can refer to the earlier conversations within the company, use the referring colleague's name, and highlight the issues or goals uncovered.

Then, with confidence and skill, the rep tackles that critical cold call to the Decision Maker -- this time with the odds in your favor.

* "Gaining Access to Senior Executives"
Kenan-Flagler Business School, University of North Carolina

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About the Author

Marie Warner is founder and President of Warner Professional Sales, LLC. Warner Professional Sales helps companies achieve **sales force success through people, performance and planning**. Warner Professional Sales helps companies get more revenue growth from their sales force by *recruiting* the right sales staff, 2) *training and developing* those sales professionals to consistently exceed revenue goals, and helping management to define and implement the best sales "process" and tactics for sales cycle control, territory assignments and quota planning.

Marie brings to client engagements over two-decades of leadership in the sale of technology, consulting and financial products and services to the Fortune 1000 and major financial institutions. This includes nine years of experience as Chief Sales Officer, in both enterprise-level and start-up organizations.

Marie Warner has authored articles in ***Mass High Tech, SalesResources.com, SalesVantage.com, EyesOnSales.com, Software Sales Journal, SalesDoctors***, and ***Women's Business*** addressing successful sales strategies and tactics. She is a member of NETSEA (New England Technology Sales Executives Association), WITI (Women in Technology, International), Human Capital Institute, The Commonwealth Group, NAPS (National Association of Personnel Services) and participates in numerous other entrepreneurial, technology and marketing organizations.

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