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Monday • July 2, 2007

Stop Calling; Start Writing

If you have ever left a cold-call voicemail message, you know the odds of getting a return call are roughly equal to the odds of getting a date with a hot, A-list Hollywood celebrity. That's because cold-calling messages typically produce less than one call back for every 10 messages, says Frank Rumbauskas, a sales coach and author of *Never Cold Call Again!* (John Wiley, 2006). Rumbauskas asserts you can boost that return message rate to 50 or 60 percent by doing one simple thing – switching to email.

He's not talking about spamming your prospects, he's talking about sending a targeted, personalized message that piques the prospect's interest and presents a compelling reason to return your "call." In other words, you'll use all the same tactics and verbiage you would with a phone call, you're simply making that call in another medium. When Rumbauskas began using this technique, he says he consistently got five or six replies for every 10 emails he sent. Even people who weren't interested, he says, would send back a quick "We have no need at this time" type of message. "I was amazed because this was such a contrast from the coldness I always experienced on the phone," he says. "It seems backwards, but more warmth and personality came through those emails than ever did on the phone."

There are five main reasons that emailing a cold opportunity works better than calling him, says Rumbauskas.

- 1. Email is convenient.** It only takes a few seconds for a prospect to type out a reply, and it can be done when it's most convenient for him. An unexpected phone call is an intrusion that comes when it's most convenient for the *salesperson*. Not only is timing usually bad for the prospect but the prospect has no idea how long the phone call might last.
- 2. Email explains the purpose of the contact.** The prospect doesn't have to stare at a message slip with your unfamiliar name and phone number and wonder why you called. He simply has to read.
- 3. Email eliminates the fear of being sold.** People have an innate fear of being sold something. On the phone, they put up walls around themselves so they won't get sucked into a pitch. Email gives them time to think without the pressure of a sales person hanging on the other end of the line.
- 4. Email doesn't interrupt the day.** A phone call has a sense of immediacy to it. The sales rep is on the line now and you have to either take the call or not. It's another decision to make and another interruption. With email, as mentioned in point #1, prospects can save it for a time that is better for them.
- 5. Email is natural.** Everyone emails today. Getting a call from a stranger is unusual, but with email, everyone feels familiar and the process is comfortable.

"As we move further into the twenty-first century, cold calling is not only losing effectiveness but is actually becoming counterproductive," explains Rumbauskas. "It annoys people. It wastes people's time. It has a great chance of turning off someone who might have been a prospect if you had contacted that person in a more legitimate manner." So next time you reach for the phone to make a cold call, stop yourself and craft a compelling email instead. The person on the

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