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# smart **Advice for Success!** Business™ matters

## Cold Feet for Cold Calls

While there are many other tools to use in sales these days – email, social networks, direct mail, etc. the telephone is still one of the best ways to build relationships and one of the most personal ways to reach customers. If you get cold feet just thinking of making a sales call, a little preparation can help you overcome your fears and begin to make successful calls.

**Generate leads.** Take a bit of the “cold” out of sales calls by generating a leads list. Identify a target list of companies who are more likely to need your services and the decision makers (or influential people) in those companies. If you can make other connections within a company through your online social networks and use them as references, even better. If you offer specific advantages over a competitor of yours, try to find leads that buy from them.

**Learn about your target companies.** It is easy to get information about your prospects online. Do not over-research to avoid making calls, but do take some time to learn a bit more about your prospects and what “solutions” of yours seem most appropriate for each.

Write down some specific points, how you might help, and questions for each lead.

**Block out enough time for calls.** You can make sales calls at any time, but it may be more beneficial to block out one or more blocks of time to focus strictly on sales calls. Blocking out an hour or more helps you to build a “rhythm” and will help make calling easier. Mornings are generally more effective than the afternoon. However, you may also want to try after hours to bypass receptionists and speak directly to your prospects.

**Identify your objective for calling each prospect.** Is your plan to get an appointment, to introduce yourself or a new product, or to make a sale over the phone? Each requires a different strategy. If your goal is to sell services or products



CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

# Direct Mail – The Reports of My Death Are Greatly Exaggerated

With the many marketing channels available, you may be overlooking, or underutilizing, one of your best advertising channels – direct mail.

There has been a lot of talk about the death of direct mail. Yes, it is crucial to utilize less costly methods of advertising, such as a website, online social media, email marketing, etc., **and** to market to clients according to their preferences. However, most businesses can also benefit by using **all** the tools in their tool belts – including direct mail.

How can you use direct mail as part of your marketing mix and why should you?

**Use direct mail to build awareness about your business.** Direct mail can help drive people to your storefront and your website, where you can use other marketing channels to help “make the sale” and build lasting and profitable customer relationships.

**Use direct mail for a marketing blitz.** If you want to build awareness, and you have the budget, consider sending direct mail weekly or even twice a week for a month or more. If you emailed with that frequency, customers might be more apt to “unsubscribe” — but they will be less likely to make an effort to stop mailings. In the meantime, your target customer base will have become more aware of your business or brand.

**Zig while others zag.** While fewer companies are using direct mail, or using it less frequently, this makes it more likely that your marketing pitch will get through to your audience. Fewer pieces in the mailbox make your pitch more noticeable. Worried about your printed materials hitting the trash? Remember that emails are easily deleted too. And you can print on recycled paper to show some “green.”

**Personalize your direct mail.** Think direct mail is not personal enough?



**Think again.** Variable-data printing allows companies to use purchase history databases to personalize everything from postcards and letters to catalogs.

**Use direct mail to sustain current customer relationships.** Offer discounts or special services in your direct mail as a call to action. Or include a bookmark, refrigerator magnet or some other item that keeps your name in front of customers. You can't do that with email!

**Single channel communication is dead.** You should not rely on one single marketing channel to get through to everyone you target. When you take a look at your entire marketing mix, consider how direct mail can factor in and use it to your advantage.

## THE PATH TO DIRECT MAIL SUCCESS

**Target your mailing.** Whether you purchase mailing lists or create lists of your own, the more you zero in on your ideal customer, the better your results.

**Write right.** No matter how many words you use in your mail piece, make sure the copy is compelling and correct.

**Clearly outline the benefits to your reader.** Remember to include the features and benefits of your services or products.

**Create compelling headlines.** A headline is the first item to capture attention – be sure it succinctly sums up your point or offer.

**Include a call to action.** Consider what you want the customer to do, and then be sure to ask them to do it. Ask your reader to use a coupon for a discount, pick up the phone, or visit your website and enter a discount code.

**Use memorable clean design.** Clean, simple design that helps you get your point across will be more useful than design that obscures your message.

**Proofread!** You spend a lot of thought and time on your mailings. Spend a little more time and be sure all of the information is correct.

**Keep your database up-to-date.** Using in-house lists? Make sure they are kept current. Do not waste money mailing to bad addresses. Update or delete bad addresses after each mailing.

**Be prepared to follow-up.** Follow-up with another direct mail piece that offers an increased benefit, a phone call, an informational mailing, or any other necessary marketing actions.

## Too Much Green?

Avoid the inevitable boredom with or backlash against “going green”

Before you join the hordes of “eco-friendly” businesses, be aware of the potential backlash against companies who profess they are going green. Some consumers are frustrated with conflicting advice about being environmentally conscious or are just tired of hearing companies tout their new eco-awareness. They may doubt your sincerity or integrity if you are pushing a green agenda.

According to the results of the 2008 Green Gap Survey by Cone LLC and The Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship (BCCCC), the group they surveyed misunderstood language commonly used in environmental advertising, which gave products “a greater environmental halo than they deserve” and created risk of a backlash. In addition, a majority of those surveyed support government regulation of environmental messaging.

In order to avoid a green marketing backlash you must be precise, be relevant, be a resource, be consistent, be sincere, and be realistic when marketing green products or services. Specific environmental claims are more credible than general claims. How is your product or service helping the environment — or hurting it less than another product or service? Be sure to make a clear connection between the product you offer and the environment, and be sure you can back up any and all green claims you make. Consider images you use to portray your products or services. Do they contradict your words or support them?

Be truthful about what you are doing and how your green efforts are making a difference or are progressing. Provide additional information and/or a resource list of third party websites for customers on your website. Consider how green fits with your mission statement, and update it if appropriate. While promoting your green, make sure you don't lose focus on your products or services.



## Where Oh Where Are Your Customers?

According to a recent Harris Poll, probably surfing the web.

Having an online business presence makes good sense. A website can be a great marketing channel to capture customers who may not frequent brick and mortar businesses.

Consider this recent Harris Poll by Harris Interactive. In December 2009, a new poll found that internet users are spending an average of 13 hours a week online. (Usage varies – one in five adult users are online for two or fewer hours and one in seven are on for 24 hours or more.)

From 1999 to 2002, adults spent an average of 7 hours a week online, and from 2003 to 2006 they spent approximately 8 to 9 hours. In 2007 usage increased to 11 hours and last year, after the financial crisis, it jumped to 14 hours.

A few of the likely causes for the increase are that people are becoming more adept at using the internet, they watch TV more often online, and they purchase more frequently online. The recession is also considered to be a factor as people have a tendency to stay home more often.

Whatever the reasons for the increase, it is becoming more crucial for companies to have some online presence. Fifty percent of all of those polled stated they had made a purchase of products and services within the last month. Adults aged 30 to 64 were more likely to make purchases than those who were under 30 or over 65. If your target market lies in the 30 to 64 age range, there is even more incentive to set up a website and begin to drive people to it through a variety of marketing channels.



over the phone, be prepared to answer basic questions. If you need to “show” not “tell about” your services, focus on getting the appointment rather than talking about your work.

**Create a sales script.** Create a basic sales script introducing yourself, your company, and how you can help your prospect. Keep your objective in mind – an introduction, an appointment, or a sale. Tailor your script for each prospect and practice it before you make your call. If you plan to make a sale over the phone, be sure you have talking points and succinct product and services information at hand. Anticipate questions and how you might answer them.

**Practice.** Practice your phone pitch in the mirror so you are comfortable with it. Do you sound nervous? Lower your voice, speak clearly and slowly, and relax and smile as you talk. (It’s proven that people can tell whether a caller is smiling or not.) Give yourself a pep talk. Remember that you are every bit as professional as your prospect and that you offer professional services and products. Be confident and polite, not apologetic. Now move those warmed-up feet to the phone!

**Know when to listen and when to stop talking.** Listen for pieces of information from your prospect that may help you to tailor a future appointment or sales pitch. If you’ve achieved your objective – the sale, the appointment, the connection – stop talking. Thank your contact, affirm that appointment or follow-up, and move on to the next contact.

## Looking for Your Silver Lining?

Coming off one of the worst global recessions, one can’t help but be anxious. However, history shows that every great loss has potential for great rebounds. The trick is to find that silver lining. If you think globally, you just might find your pot of gold.



According to *Global Finance*, this global recession is proving to be a “springboard” for China and India (as well as other Rapidly Developing Economies (RDEs) like Asia, Brazil, Mexico, and Eastern Europe). Companies in China and India were not immune to the recession and those that were in debt have struggled. However, many companies in those two countries were able to advance or position themselves for growth during the recession.

Many companies from China and India had cash on hand or were able to use stimulus funds to grow. They were in a better position to acquire weaker businesses, make large investments in technology, enter new business areas, or turn their focus to their home markets to foster growth. While “most American companies were in a holding pattern” these global companies have prepared themselves for a post-recession leap. There are obstacles to business growth in both China and India and many other RDEs; a high poverty rate, tight government controls, and lack of financial transparency are a few of the stumbling blocks. To service companies in RDEs, it will be crucial to know both the legal system and cultural customs of those RDEs.

It won’t happen overnight, but China, India, and other RDEs are poised to become global industrial and financial centers, and this century may prove to be “The Asian Century.” In the coming years, it may pay for you to increase your global business awareness and search for new opportunities, especially in Asia.

*Global Finance*, <http://www.gfmag.com/latest/features/9932-cover-story-global-leaders-in-waiting.html>