

## 10 Biggest Cold Calling Mistakes Most Recruiters Make – and How to Avoid Them

*Would you rather make 100 calls with a 5% success rate – or 25 calls with a 20% success rate?* Before you invest any more time & energy cold calling, make sure you're being as effective as possible. Which of the following mistakes are you making? Be honest with yourself, and make a decision to do something about it. Don't try to completely change what you're doing ... instead focus on improving one thing at a time.

1. **Not making business development a priority.** Schedule time for business development every day ideally – or at least 3 days per week. Stick to your schedule, even when you're "too busy." Consistency is the key. *Remember – just 10 new contacts per day is 2400 per year!*
2. **Not putting yourself in a positive mindset:** Your success in canvassing is at least 50% psychology. What state must you be in to be effective at canvassing? Confident? Enthusiastic? Motivated? Resourceful? Cheerful? Energetic? It's not good enough to 'canvass when you feel like it.' You must be able to access those positive emotions on cue. Start with your physiology – sit how you'd be sitting if you felt energized and unstoppable. You might need to stand up for this! Breathe how you would breathe if you felt relaxed and confident. Put a smile on your face! Now focus on the results you want – imagine clients being warm and receptive. Think of a time when a cold call turned into one of your best clients.
3. **Calling the wrong prospects:** Rather than making random canvass calls, be strategic about who you call. Decide who your target market is. What is the profile of your ideal client? Identify companies who fit that profile. Prepare a prospect list made up of companies who you know have a requirement, and/or companies who are likely to have future potential. Call your hottest prospects first! At the end of each day, invest 15 minutes to create your call list for the following day.
4. **Not setting clear objectives:** Unless you know what you're aiming for, you're unlikely to hit the bullseye. What are your primary and secondary objectives? Is it a vacancy? A client visit? An interview? Get clear on your objectives before picking up the phone.
5. **Lack of preparation:** The best way to reduce the pressure of cold calling is to decide in advance what you want to say. There's a big difference between reading a script and *working from* a script. A carefully thought out word-track gives you a framework to fall back on. So rather than worrying about what to say, you can focus your attention on listening to your prospect and building incredible rapport.

6. **Not speaking to the decision maker:** Don't bother selling to secretaries – they have the power to say 'no' but not the power to say 'yes.' Unless you're dealing with the real decision-maker, your ability to influence the client's buying behaviour is minimal. And don't assume you must go through the HR department. Target line management first. Don't be afraid to start from the top down. If you call the Managing Director and she tells you to speak to line manager, you can call the line manager and say "your MD suggested I call you."
7. **Not setting yourself activity targets:** In order to stay focused, it's critical to set yourself targets – targets for number of call attempts, decision makers contacted, new vacancies, client visits arranged, etc. These Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will help you help you stay on track. They give you a benchmark against which to measure your success and help you identify areas for improvement. Record your daily activity and review your progress weekly.
8. **Having a weak opening statement:** Your opening statement must capture the prospects attention in the first 10-20 seconds. Craft an opening statement that generates interest and reduces resistance. Don't try to sell your service in the opening statement. The sole purpose of your opening statement is to grab the person's attention and move them quickly to the questioning phase of the call. This should include your name, company and the key benefit or result you provide.
9. **Asking too many closed questions:** In order to have a meaningful conversation with someone, you need to ask them plenty of open questions. If you met someone at a party and wanted to make an impression, would you a) tell them all about yourself and how great you are, or b) demonstrate a genuine interest in them by asking them questions about him or herself? Obviously the answer is B! So write yourself a list of at least a dozen open questions that you can ask your prospects. Hint: Most of them will begin with the words "what" and "how."
10. **Giving up too easily:** The biggest cause of failure among sales people is giving up too soon:
  - 48% quit after the first contact
  - 20% quit after the second contact
  - 7% quit after the third contact
  - 5% quit after the fourth contact
  - 4% quit after the fifth contact

And yet 80% of customers say "yes" *after* the sixth contact! Many clients will not buy from you on the first call. And that's OK! At least they are aware of you now and you've started to build a relationship. However they will very quickly forget you! Unless you follow up, your call has been a complete waste of effort. You've already done the hard work of cold calling. The next time it will be a warm call! Keep them in your sights and stay in touch by phone, letter and email.