



Prospecting

SALES APPROACH

Prospecting is a term that is recognized by people involved in the selling profession. Every good salesperson understands the value of good prospecting. Whether you are trying to sell a product or trying to sell yourself, it is vitally important to generate a list of prospects. Some of the prospects (or potential employers) you will be able to identify will result from your networking efforts. Otherwise, a good deal of your prospects may come from sources you have generated entirely on your own through market research and a process described as "Cold Calling."



COLD CALLING

Cold Calling means making initial contacts with individuals you've never met before. Whether in person, by mail or by telephone, it involves calling upon a stranger, a person with whom you have had no prior contact and for whom you have no detailed background information. It means approaching a potential employer without an appointment and introducing yourself. Once you have established rapport with this new contact, this previously unknown individual becomes a source of vital information who can now provide referrals and job leads. This person may be hiring or may know the names of potential employers who are hiring. To be sure, this informal method of contacting prospects requires an assertive, or even aggressive, approach on the part of the job seeker.

PERSISTENCE

Breaking into the Hidden Job Market will require persistence. An effective campaign will involve a combination of tactics: writing letters of introduction, sending out resumes, calling on the telephone several times, writing follow-up letters, and visiting the companies in person. Your goal is to establish rapport, create a positive impression, and get an interview. You must continually remind the employer of who you are.

PROSPECT LIST

Generating leads by creating a good list of qualified prospects is vital to job search success in the same way that it is vital to sales success. Your goal is to compile a list of possible employers (prospects) to whom you can target your marketing efforts. The list should include the names of contacts, mailing addresses, and telephone numbers, along with critical facts about the organization. Once you have a good list of prospective employers, you can then launch a campaign designed to establish rapport, gather information, and create demand.

TOOLS

This prospect list may be compiled in a number of different ways, utilizing a variety of resources, including the Telephone Directory (Yellow Pages), Chamber of Commerce Directories, Industrial Guides, Company Websites, Employee Directories, Annual Reports, Alumni Directories, Professional Association Directories, and Civic Organization Membership Lists. Local newspapers often run special sections about prominent people, new businesses, and community events.

Among the more popular industry and market rating services and databases are Hoovers, Manta, Standard & Poors, and Dunn & Bradstreet, and Lexis Nexis. On-line resources can be very helpful. Market and industry databases can be accessed easily through search engines using keyword searches.

The *Yellow Pages* Telephone Directory is probably the most ideal resource. Virtually every business, agency, organization, school system, and governmental entity is listed. Obtain the *Yellow Pages* for whatever city you intend to prospect. The categories are indexed by business type. Identify all the category headings that relate to your field.



GO FOR THE COMPANY

Pursue the company, not the job. When prospecting, don't concern yourself with ads for job openings and inquiries into who's hiring. Compile your prospect list based on organizations that are involved in the kind of work you want to do. Select companies in your field and then initiate contact with them.

When contacting a small organization, go for the general manager. In a larger organization, contact the person in charge of the functional area you are interested in (Dept Head, Director). Do not contact the human resource department.

Get to know the "gatekeepers." If the person you are trying to contact has an assistant, secretary, or receptionist who screens phone calls and arranges appointments for that person, introduce yourself and, without being pushy, try to establish rapport.

MANAGING YOUR CAMPAIGN

Successful job seekers begin by identifying their career goal; by determining what career direction they want to go in; by determining what career position they want to pursue. Next they conduct detailed research about the industry they want to go into and the companies within that industry they are the most interested in. Once the research of complete, it is time to begin the job search.

JOB MARKET RESEARCH

Conduct thorough job market research: Identify your market (city, area, region, location). Identify your industry (field). Identify the total number of companies (organizations) within your industry (field).

Within your chosen market, define your industry or field of interest. You may decide to choose your market based on the industries that exist there. Within your chosen industry, determine the total number of companies or organizations.

IMPLEMENT YOUR STRATEGY

Launch your campaign: Create a prospect list based on solid market research. Then, mail out resumes and cover letters. And then make follow-up telephone calls.

FOLLOW UP TECHNIQUES

When following up by telephone, after you have mailed your resume and cover letter, you are likely to encounter a few obstacles. Consider the following tactics and techniques.

Voice Mail - If you telephone a contact and reach an answering machine or voice mail service, be careful about the message you leave. State your name. State the name of the person you are trying to reach. Do not state your business. Do not leave your telephone number. Do not ask him or her to return your call. Say simply: "Hello, this is John Smith. I was trying to reach Mike Jones. I'm sorry I missed you. I'll call you back this afternoon."

Gatekeeper - If you telephone a contact and reach a secretary, receptionist, or assistant, be sure to establish immediate rapport. Give a friendly greeting. Introduce yourself immediately. Ask for your contact by a familiar name (not a formal name). Say: "He's expecting my call."

Department Contact - If you reach the department head, director or manager, be sure to address him or her formally. Introduce yourself. Say: "I'm calling as a follow-up to confirm that you received the letter I sent you. I'd like to make an appointment to meet with you at your convenience. I've been researching your company. I am very interested in gathering industry information and investigating my career options. I would like to get your advice as to how someone with my background goes about exploring opportunities in your field."

