memoryBlue

8 Principles of Effective Prospecting

Outbound techniques that **make cold leads feel warm**

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Though many sales representatives may instinctively despise prospecting, it is the foundational step in nearly any sales life cycle. Often prospecting reluctance comes from the use of ineffective or half-baked prospecting strategies that lead to dead end leads and cold responses.

Ineffective prospecting can lead to wasted time on unqualified leads, a bad first company impression, and/or low customer conversion rates.

Many entry-level tech sales representatives are left without good training on effective prospect communication, uncovering needs, and delivering value. We're looking to break the mold and share our proven prospecting principles that have been key to decreasing SDR ramp time and increasing pipeline.

Overcome prospecting reluctance and get real results from your efforts by diving into our **8 Principles of Effective Prospecting:**

- Building Outreach Target Lists
- Engaging Prospects with Your Opening Statement (OS)
- Discovering Problems and Needs
- Digging into Impact of Pain
- Company Value Picture Painting
- Overcoming Prospect Objections
- Advancing the Sales Process
- Augmenting Calls with Emails and Voicemails

Building Outreach Target Lists

> "You can be the greatest sales professional the world has ever known, with the greatest product the known universe has ever seen, but will get nowhere if you're talking to the wrong people"

List building is arguably the most important tool in your prospecting toolkit. Before even looking into prospects, you need to define two things, your Ideal Customer Profile (ICP) and your Buyer Persona.

Ideal Customer Profile (ICP)

A description of the company—not the buyer or end user—that's a perfect fit for your solution, focusing on industry, company size, geographic location, revenue, etc.

Buyer Persona

A representation of your ideal customer based on market research and data about your existing customers. Consider customer demographics, behavior patterns, motivations, goals, and common pain points.

Based on your definition of your ICP and target buyer persona, you build an effective prospect list utilizing these three simple steps:

1. Identify target prospects within your ICP that fit your persona
2. Find and collect their contact information through LinkedIn, or utilizing a data aggregation tool like ZoomInfo.
3. Add notes about why you are calling this prospect and information that may help you on your call

TIP: ALWAYS have notes on why this person fits your ICP/persona. Calling a prospect without notes forces you to treat most prospects the same, which depersonalizes your call and makes it less impactful for the prospect.

Engaging Prospects with Your Opening Statement (OS)

Once you're ready to start your outreach, you need to decide how you will start your call when someone picks up. Your introduction and OS should be brief but provide enough information to spark curiosity within the prospect.

The most important pieces of an introduction are:

- Prospect's name
- Your first/last name
- Your company
- Permission to continue

The most important pieces of an OS are:

- Reason for call, specific to the prospect (taken from your list building notes)
- Similar companies/personas related to the prospect that value your solution
- What value you have provided to other companies, with specific numbers/quantification
- Open-ended question about the current state of the prospect's projects/job/initiatives

Introduction & OS Example:

You (intro):
"Hi Jim, this is Jane Smith from memoryBlue. Did I catch you at a bad time?"

Prospect:
"It's never a great time, what's up?"

You (OS):
"The reason for the call, Jim, is I've been working with other Sales Directors at tech companies like Amazon and Facebook. They trust us to fill their sales pipeline with qualified meetings that have resulted in increases in pipeline revenue by as much as $30M. We may be able to replicate this for you. What does your current outbound sales process look like?"

TIP: Your only goal at this point of the call is to get the prospect to buy-in for the next minute, not sell your solution yet. Think about your delivery, including your pitch, pace, tone, and volume.

Discovering Problems and Needs

It's extremely difficult to get a prospect on board with your solution by simply pitching it to them, especially in cold outreach. You need to discover a problem they may have by asking questions and being curious.

You want to lead the prospect to:

- Recognize the problem
- Admit its impact to their business
- Be in agreement that a solution is necessary and actionable

Buyers are inherently resistant to change because it introduces uncertainty and risk.

"What if this doesn't work out and I'm worse off than I am today?"

So, what makes a prospect open to buying a solution and accepting the risk of change?

Pain

They have a problem NOW that needs to be solved

Fear

They need to take preventative measures now to avoid a future problem

Gain

They want to make themselves feel better, or improve perception in their job

TIP: After your opening statement (OS), ask questions that enable you to:

1. Understand the prospects current situation
2. Uncover a problem (pain, fear, gain)
3. Uncover the impact of the problem
4. Approach a solution with empathy

Digging into the Impact of Pain

Solving a pain you just uncovered sounds impossible without longer conversation. You want to get the prospect talking so you can listen and absorb, before providing your solution with empathy. You can't be empathetic to something you don't understand, so be curious first.

Curiosity is fueled by open-ended questions. Doctors don't prescribe before diagnosing, and you shouldn't either! **Open-ended questions lead the prospect to explain their situation, pain, or goal, rather than a simple "yes" or "no" answer.**

Use the **5 Ws (and H)** for engagement that lead the prospect to talk:

Who have you seen success with in the past?

What kind of challenges are you facing day-to-day?

Where do you see your budget going in the next 6 months?

When was the last time you evaluated your sales process?

Why did you choose that solution over others you evaluated?

How does your team measure your success currently?

TIP: Clarify your prospects answers to open-ended question by repeating a portion of their answer back and asking follow-up questions. This is called active listening and it makes the prospect feel like you have their best interest in mind. I.E. "You mentioned that you haven't found a way to evaluate inbound leads based on your ICP. How does that impact your Account Executive's inbound close rate?"

Company Value Picture Painting

Now that you've uncovered pain and empathized with the prospect, you're able to consultatively pitch to position your solution in the prospect's head.

Painting the picture for prospects requires you to be empathetic and relatable based on all the information you discovered by your curious questioning.

Paint your picture utilizing:

- An empathetic statement, showing you understand
- The solution you've provided to other companies with a similar problem
- Quantified value that can be backed up by data

An Example:

"That's actually something I hear a lot! Amazon was in a similar situation to yours where they had **many incoming leads with a low close rate.** By implementing **a methodical lead qualifying strategy and providing well-trained and coached SDRs,** we improved their **close rate by 55% and increased inbound revenues by $30M."**

TIP: Be specific when bringing up past case studies or use cases. Including quantified benefits makes your solution more realistic to the prospect and makes them hungry to learn more and achieve the same for themselves.

Overcoming Prospect Objections

There's very little chance you'll make it all the way to your close before hitting into an objection. It's understandable for prospects to question the validity of your solution or their qualification as a potential customer.

Not only does gracefully handling prospect concerns increase their trust in you, but it avoids the prospect bringing up the avoided objection later in the sale process, when objections are often harder to overcome.

Overcome Common Objections

Yes, it's a bad time

- Don't accept this as an excuse to end the call, but make sure it's worth calling this prospect back
- Explain you will be quick and deliver your opening statement
- Often prospects will answer your open-ended question unless this objection is truly valid – use empathy.

Not a Priority

- Find out what is a priority, if not the problem you uncovered, and dig into what solutions they're working on for their current priority.
- Get a timeline of when the problem you uncovered would become a priority.
- Emphasize the picture you've painted about your solution's value to the prospect's problem.

We're not looking into that right now

- What they really mean is "it's not worth my time to look into this"
- Learn the real reason they aren't interested right now. "No" is better than "Maybe later" in sales.
- Reiterate value as it pertains to the prospect and find out "when" would be a good time to look into your solution.

No Budget

- Demonstrate the value of your product and talk about money saving possibilities with your solution (if applicable)
- Use this objection as a way to ask about their budgeting process and what it looks like to create budget for a solution like yours.

Send me an email

- Don't fight sending them an email, but ask questions to make that email valuable to them and not just another marketing email
- Ask specifically what they would like to see in the email. Use your picture painting skills to ask about specific use cases they might want to hear more about, or resources you could provide in that email.
- Ask for the "best email" to send that to, even if you have their email. Sometimes, they'll give you the email of a higher-level decision maker, advancing your sales process.

We have that covered

- Do NOT get defensive about their current solution being lesser than yours.
- Gather information about the problem they're covering and the solution currently in place. Ask what's working well and what isn't working well. Be curious about the solution they have and dig into what makes them feel they're "covered."
- Use their response to explain why your solution might be a better fit.

TIP: Listen, understand, and overcome objections when possible by distinguishing the difference between a prospect pushing you off the phone and a real concern. Keep track of your most heard objections and the way you've successfully handled them.

Advancing the Sales Process

If a conversation ends with no action items, all you've done is gather information, which means that could be the end of the deal. After a discovery call, you want to lead the prospect through the sales process, often scheduled follow-up meeting that allows a deeper dive.

When to Close

The time to close should be in the best interest of the prospect, not the sales representative. It should come after you understand their situation, uncovered pain, uncovered impact of the pain, and have qualified them as a fit.

Parts of an Effective Close

1. Transition statement
2. Relatable business
3. Quantitative value
4. Qualitative value
5. Solution
6. Request for specific time for follow-up

> **"Let's do this.** How about we continue this conversation when I'm not catching you out of the blue so I can show you how other **sales organizations have increased their close rate by more than 50%** using our **outsourced SDR structure. What does your schedule look like tomorrow afternoon?"**

Post Close Checklist

1. Ask for the best email to send the calendar invite to
2. Ask who else may find value in joining the call (decision makers/influencers)
3. Ask that they accept your calendar invite when it comes to their inbox
4. Add value before signing off

After they've given you a time and you've explained you will send over a calendar invite, you need to summarize what you've talked about the value of the follow-up call to avoid a prospect "no-showing" to your meeting. You'll also want to ask what information might make the best use of their time in the follow-up.

> "Based on what we've talked about, I'll make sure to hit on how outsourced SDRs can increase close rate, but what else would you like me to cover to make the best use of our time?"

TIP: Asking what else you can cover in the follow up will often lead to you uncovering additional pain points or interests the prospect hasn't divulged yet. Now that they're interested, they're willing to give you more information so they can make use of your follow-up meeting.

Augmenting Calls with Voicemails and Emails

Your outreach strategy should include multiple touch points that each have their own specific goal. If you always call, but never leave voicemails or send emails, you may never reach your prospect – and vice-versa. The best outreach strategy uses all three – calls, voicemails, and emails – to provide value to the prospect and uncover pain.

On average, it takes five touch points to receive a response from a prospect, so professional persistence is key. However, a personalized approach should be used across all three. You've done the research, you've identified they may have a need, and now you just need to get them on board with what you've discovered.

A typical outreach cadence may look something like this:

Timing	Call?	Voicemail	Email	Message
Day 0		VM #1	Email #1	Your Alternative to Internal SDRs
Day 3		None	Email #2	RE: Your Alternative to Internal SDRs
Day 7		VM #2	Email #3	Owner's Roadmap – How to win with outside sales reps
Day 10		VM #3	Email #4	Pain #1 – How to qualify leads
Day 15	Yes	VM #4	Email #5	Gain – Founders Advantage in the war against unqualified leads (with research)
Day 20		VM #5	Email #6	Founder pain #2 – Wasted Resources on Bad Leads
Day 25		VM #6	Email #7	Conventional Lead Qualifying Scorecard
Day 28		VM #7	Email #8	Pain #3 – Why Outsource instead of Insource
Day 31		None	Email #9	Name – Touching Base
Day 35		VM #8	Email #10	FW: Name – Touching Base

TIP: Make each activity in your cadence serve a specific purpose. Maybe you're following up your call with an email to deliver additional information you can't leave in a voicemail. Maybe your voicemail provides a use case you think may resonate with them. However you utilize the activities, make sure they're personalized to the prospect.

The 8 Principles of Effective Prospecting

After reading through the 8 Principles of Effective Prospecting, you're ready to jump into your new cadence. You can list build, make valuable calls that advance prospects through the sales process, and you know how to make the follow-up meeting useful.

Building Outreach Target Lists
Research and collect information about prospects who fit your persona and ICP

Engaging Prospects with Your Opening Statement (OS)
Introduce yourself to your prospect and gain buy-in to continue the call

Discovering Problems and Needs
Ask open-ended questions to curiously discover the prospect's priorities and problems that warrant your solution

Digging into Impact of Pain
Help the prospect understand their problem and feel inclined to solve it by validating and empathizing

Company Value Picture Painting
Utilize specific, relatable use cases of your solution based on the information provided by your prospect in discovery

Overcoming Prospect Objections
Don't avoid objections, overcome them by re-explaining value and reiterating the conversation you've just had to uncover pain

Advancing the Sales Process
Find time to valuably continue the conversation and dive deeper into your solution.

Augmenting Calls with Emails and Voicemails
Have a structured cadence that implements more than one outreach activity and continues for more than five touch points

After all, your goal in a prospecting call is not to immediately sell the solution, but to gauge the prospect's interest in continuing the conversation and seeing value in your solution.