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# How Do You Create Trust With Prospects?

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By Deborah Daily, Co-Owner, Buckaroo Marketing/New Media



There was a time when cold calling was the mainstay of the sales process. Successful salespeople were those who had the courage to pick up the phone and call prospects, knowing that nine out of ten would reject them outright.

Cold calling no longer works for a variety of reasons. For one, people rarely answer calls immediately. The invention of voicemail allows us to put off talking to people until we determine why they're calling. The adoption of Caller ID made screening calls the norm, and if we don't recognize your name or your company's name, why would we pick up? The scourge of poorly executed telemarketing has made that word synonymous with deception, as we're subjected to thickly accented voices offering to fix computer problems that don't exist. In addition, the internet has made nearly every company a global player, increasing the sheer number of companies that are trying to market to us.

But the biggest reason cold calling has always been a generally inefficient approach is that it does nothing to create trust with the people you're trying to sell to. Even if your call is answered -- and keep in mind that phone calls are always an interruption (unless you're one of those people who stares at your phone, waiting for it to ring) -- the person on the other end has no idea who you are, probably isn't all that familiar with your company, and is naturally going to be suspicious of the message you plan to deliver.

That's why you need a deliberate approach to build trust among prospects before beginning your direct sales effort. For years, one of the best ways to do that in a business-to-business context was advertising in trade publications. Maintaining a highly visible presence in those publications helped companies gradually built up familiarity among their readers, who presumably were their target audiences. When sales reps made contacts with those audiences, they already knew something about the company.

Digital media has created a long list of other marketing channels that can accomplish the same purpose, such as email marketing and social media. In particular, video provides an excellent way to build familiarity and trust. When you include a brief video clip in an email or have team members on short videos on your website, your prospects develop a sense of familiarity more quickly. When you finally meet in person, they feel they already know you, putting you steps ahead on the road to building trust.

These channels offer another proven way to build familiarity and demonstrate your expertise, if you're willing to perform the extra work to make sure you're being seen. Too many companies invest tidy sums to create a website, then sit back and wait for business to come to them. That rarely works, especially when they fail to make regular updates to those websites.

There are many ways to demonstrate your expertise over the internet. One of those most simple is developing an ongoing blogging effort in which you share advice or address common questions about the issues your customers are facing. You can also develop videos that show how your solution helps customers solve problems. For more complex or detailed situations, you may want to consider creating white papers that collect a substantial amount of valuable information and share it with an educational, authoritative tone.

Whether or not you realize it, you're familiar with a particularly powerful way to share your expertise. This article is a prime example of that. Both print and online publications have a strong demand for content they believe will benefit their readers, so they keep reading and make the publications more appealing to advertisers.

You already have knowledge that would benefit others, so it's just a matter of conveying your expertise in a variety of formats. If you lack the time or confidence in your own ability to write, you can work with a marketing partner to develop content that will target your prospects in effective ways. Even if you are comfortable with developing your own efforts, partnering with an outside expert can help you sharpen your efforts and allow you to focus your limited time where it's needed most.

No matter what channel you use, a critical element of building trust with prospects is to focus on them and their needs or concerns. Don't follow the lead of companies that use blogs, article, and videos to drone on about how great they are, because that's not going to be compelling to those you want to reach. Instead, position your company and what you offer as a solution. Focus on areas where they need help and show them how you can provide it. That's the most effective way to create real trust.

Deborah Daily is co-owner of Buckaroo Marketing | New Media, a Fishers-based advertising agency established in 1999. She can be reached at [dldaily@gobuckaroo.com](mailto:dldaily@gobuckaroo.com).

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