



WHERE DO YOU PROSPECT?

Have you ever been told, “Here’s your business cards, there’s a street. Now go and bang on some doors.”? Or how about, “Here is the phone book, start dialing!” Although these shotgun methods of prospecting may produce results, it really is sheer luck if they do. The chances that you happen to knock on the right door, or dial the right number, at the exact time when a prospect is ready to buy are actually quite slim.

Granted, sales is a numbers game, requiring you to make a certain number of calls to find one prospect, but what if you could improve the odds? If it used to take you 20 calls to find one prospect, how much more would you sell if it only took you 10 calls?

The fact of the matter is where you prospect is as important as how much you prospect. In other words, you should spend your time where you are most likely to be successful. It is dangerous to believe that every company can and will buy your product or service. For example, if you sell restaurant supplies, it is unlikely that you will make any sales to retail clothing stores. You would be better off not trying to in the first place!

To maximize your prospecting time, you need to clearly define what types of companies will most likely buy your products. This definition is commonly referred to as your target market, and it is essentially a description of your current and future customers. This description should include the industry which they operate in, the size of the company perhaps based on the number of employees, the products they buy and the competitors they buy them from. Your target market definition may be more specific depending on the product or service you sell.

Your target market definition should also include when a prospect can buy. Ask yourself how often a company re-orders your product or how often they re-negotiate the contract for its use. If a company is only 2 years into a 5 year buying cycle, they really are not a prospect at this time.

The best way to define where to spend your prospecting efforts is to analyze where you have been successful in the past. Make a list or spreadsheet of all of your last quarter’s sales, and cross reference it to your target market definition, with a separate column for industry, size of business, geographical location etc. Do you see trends emerge? Do you make more sales to certain sized companies in particular industries in specific geographical markets? Chances are you do, and that is where you should be spending your prospecting time.

Once you know your targets, spend your time where you’re most likely to find them. Don’t just work harder, work smarter!

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Susan A. Enns is managing partner of B2B Sales Connections. She has a proven track record of success, with over 20 years of direct sales, management and executive level business to business experience. Currently, Susan provides revenue-generating consulting services to sales organizations and sales professionals in the business to business marketplace, including the operation of Canada’s premier niche job board and career training website for business to business sales professionals. She has written the training course *Action Plan For Sales Success*, and as the B2B Sales Coach, she writes and edits the company’s newsletter, *AIM HIGHER*. For more information, please visit www.b2bsalesconnections.com or contact Susan directly at senns@b2bsalesconnections.com or www.linkedin.com/in/susanenns.