

FINDING WORK – Cold Calling

What Is Cold Calling?

Cold calling is directly approaching someone by phone, in person (or sometimes via email) to ask if they would consider hiring someone with your specific competencies or for the kind of work you'd like to do.

If they are not hiring, this contact can still be useful which is why an interactive conversation is crucial. Ask about their typical hiring periods or about other employers they may know with possible staffing needs.

What are the benefits?

- ✓ Cold calling is one of the most overlooked and potentially rewarding job search strategies. Most job seekers only rely on electronically submitting applications to advertised or posted jobs, despite an estimated 80% of jobs which are believed to be 'hidden' – unadvertised and unposted.
- ✓ Just because jobs aren't posted doesn't mean they don't exist. Many companies choose not to allocate limited resources on advertising or to monitor online postings and evaluate thousands of resumes. Rather, they add high quality staff when they meet or hear about them, avoiding time and expense.
- ✓ In many cases the jobs section on a company's website may only be periodically updated, resulting in a lag between when a job becomes available, when it is posted online or removed once filled or cancelled.
- ✓ In almost every organization, calling and speaking to people unknown to you is a daily activity. Cold calling as part of your job search shows that you take initiative, are assertive and proactive, and unafraid of making the calls needed to get a job done. These are qualities needed by many companies, departments or employers.
- ✓ Cold calling demonstrates your convincing verbal/conversational communication skills first hand to hiring managers who value verbal communication and who can make the decision to hire you.
- ✓ Uncovering job leads and opportunities by cold calling can happen quickly and be very effective when you need to find a job in a short time. In one hour, 10+ calls can be made directly to employers with decision-making capacity if you prepare effectively.

What are the challenges?

- ✓ Calling strangers and asking a direct question about employment does not come easily to most people. Cold calling can be stressful, but becomes easier as you make more calls. It may take one call or as many as 30+ to see results. Don't be discouraged. Expect negative responses.
- ✓ Cold calling won't guarantee a job, but is a useful strategy to find jobs and new leads. Add cold calling to other job search strategies to ensure you have covered all your bases.

How Do I Cold Call?

Before the call

- **Start with a plan.** Include clear and realistic expectations about calling and a clear understanding of the work you want the person you are calling to remember you can do.
- **Target departments in companies.** Choose the industry you want to be in or make a list of organizations you want to work with. A good list can be developed from professional association membership lists, news articles and trade publications supplemented by Internet searches.
- **Ask your personal network.** This includes people you already know – if they know anyone who currently or previously worked in these organizations. Make note to use their name as a part of your introduction to those people (see scripts below). This is known as a “Warm Call”.
- **Minimize completely random cold calling.** Researching in advance improves results and increases your self confidence. Set aside a specific time frame for research.
 - » Use your Internet skills to research organizations. Find out where in the organization the type of work you want is currently being done or the department you would be a good fit with. What projects, activities, events, challenges or opportunities are they working on? Make note of specific ones of interest and identify what you can do that is related.
 - » Find the name of the correct person to speak with. Check company websites, newsletters and LinkedIn for the manager’s name. They are usually the hiring decision maker. Unless you want to work in HR, keep your contact targets in the departments or areas in which you wish to work.
 - » Pre-call to confirm your information or to get information you could not find. Use the department or organization’s general number. Confirm the address, name and title of the manager you are interested in. If you are not sure of the department, tell them what you are interested in and ask who oversees that. A simple, straightforward request works well.

“I am interested in your on-site day care. Who would be in charge of that?”

“I need to send some information to the head of your accounting department. Can you provide me with the correct spelling of their name and their title?”

“I am updating a mailing list. Can you tell me who oversees warehouse operations?”

If you are connected to the hiring manager, confirm their name, title and ask if this is a good time to talk.

- **Write out specifics.** Include what you would like to say and ask. Identify and tailor what you say to what you can do for the person you are calling based on the information you were able to find in your research. Where your skills and their business overlap is the value you have to contribute.
- **Find a quiet place to call without distraction or interruption.** Have your ‘tools’ handy – scripts, contact list, pen, resume, datebook and paper to take notes. Plan calls in batches to ensure you get positive responses to balance unsuccessful ones. It can help to have the organization’s webpage open during your call.

The call

A cold call is comprised of four parts:

- i. A personal introduction;
- ii. Why you are calling and a brief description of your relevant experience and education;
- iii. A specific question regarding employment;
- iv. A graceful and polished closing.



- **Call early in the morning or at the end of the day.** This improves your chances of getting someone at their desk. Be knowledgeable and respectful of busy times in the industry. Keep the conversation short.
- **Speak directly with a manager.** Your goal is to get a meeting with someone who has the authority to hire you. An operational manager can immediately compare his or her current needs with your abilities and give you instant feedback about employment possibilities. These people occasionally have the ability to create a project, contract or term opportunity that often turns into a permanent role.
- **Make the call.** Always address the person by their formal name until asked to do otherwise. Outline your reason for calling and ask about current hiring needs. If no opportunity is identified, ask about future needs, peak hiring periods or other companies your contact may have heard might need help.

"Good morning Mr. Doe. My name is _____. Mr. Smith from ABC company suggested I call you. I am a recent Mount Royal University graduate with hands-on experience in planning trade show displays and organizing children's events. I wonder if you have any openings for someone with my education and experience. Is it possible to meet with you? . . . Is there another way I can help your organization?"

"Hi Ms. Rae, my name is _____. I am a second year student in the _____ program at Mount Royal University and am able to research and prepare reports and proposals, recruit and train volunteers and successfully resolve customer complaints. Do you anticipate having summer job openings for someone with my abilities? . . . I won't take anymore of your time, but can you suggest anyone else for me to talk to within your company or elsewhere?"

"Hello, my name is Chris. I read the article in the _____ where you were featured. Congratulations on the _____ new venture. I have recently completed my time with ABC Company and have _____ years experience in _____ and solid accomplishments doing _____. I am calling to ask about your requirements for someone with my abilities in your new venture. . . . Is there a time of the year you expect to experience staffing needs?"

- **Leave a message.** If you get voice mail, leave your name but not your reason for calling. Let them know a date and time you will call back again. Then do so. If you are unable to reach them after 3 tries, use the general number and indicate they are expecting your call.
- **Track your progress.** Include companies, contact details, conversations with and referrals from people you speak with. Multiple calls for the same purpose makes remembering details about who you promised what (such as sending in a resume, providing a sample of work) confusing without notes.

After the call

- **Review your notes.** If you promised to do anything, do it soon. If you promised to call again, make a note in your datebook or phone calendar to do so promptly.
- **Mark your calendar.** If they indicated they'd call you back, make a note in your datebook or phone calendar one week from the call. If you haven't heard back from them, call again. It is likely they forgot. When you call, let them know who you are and that you are following up on a previous conversation and what you talked about.
- **Send a resume and cover letter to the decision maker.** Remind them of your conversation and clarify what type of work you are able to do. Ask them to share your resume with anyone they believe might need assistance.
- **Send a thank you to everyone who took time to speak with you.** This can be an email note or an actual thank you card. Reaffirm your interest in contributing to their operation.



DO	DON'T
Have a specific employment objective.	Read directly from your script.
Research the organization and contact.	Leave voice messages expecting a call back.
Be clear about what competencies you have and how they connect to the employer's work.	Hesitate, apologize, mumble, be aggressive, pushy or show frustration.
Maintain a record of your calls, messages and conversations.	Ask questions which are easily found on the company website.
Send a thank you.	Lie or mislead about your qualifications.

Dealing With Objections

Objection: *I'm sorry but Mr./Ms. Jones cannot speak with you.*

Possible response: *"I understand they must be very busy. When is a better time to call? Is there someone else in their department I could speak to such as a project leader? It will only take a minute of their time...What is their direct number?"*

TIP: Be respectfully persistent, within limits. Repeat you only seek a few minutes.

When asked if the person you are calling could call you back.

Possible response: *"I'm going to be away from my desk off and on. Perhaps you would be kind enough to suggest a good time for me to call back."*

TIP: Be understanding and don't take it personally. People are busy; expect negative responses.

Objection: *I'm very busy. I just don't have time.*

Possible response: *"I understand that you are very busy. Is there a time that may be more convenient?"*

Objection: *If this is about a job, we have no positions available.*

Possible response: *"That's OK, Mr./Ms. Jones. I realize there may not be any positions at this time, but I would appreciate suggestions I could follow up on. If possible, I'd still like to meet with you for a few minutes to help me clarify how I may be of assistance in the future . . . When are peak recruiting periods for this area? . . . Who else might I contact?"*

TIP: Keep trying to meet. Put them at ease about having a job right now. Call back later.

Objection: *Mr. Jones is no longer with ABC Company.*

Possible response: *"I wanted to speak with Mr. Jones regarding creative design projects he was overseeing. Can you tell me who oversees those projects now?"*

TIP: Don't take it personally. Expect setbacks.

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