

## ***“Cold Calls Revisited, Making Every Call A Great Call”***

By Paul Siker

Dale Carnegie, one of the pre-eminent thinkers on human relations, once said, *“There are four ways, and only four ways, in which we have contact with the world. We are evaluated and classified by these four contacts: what we do, how we look, what we say, and how we say it.”* For recruiters charged with making introductory or “Cold Calls” to passive candidate prospects, Carnegie’s observation about “what is said” and “how it is said” rings especially true.

When initiating contact with passive candidate prospects, a recruiter’s communications style and the overall content of what is being conveyed, have tremendous bearing on how he or she will be received by the call recipient. That individuals subconsciously formulate an array of judgments upon first meeting another person, has been well documented. By extension, people rely upon these same intuitive skills to assess the person behind the voice on the other end of a phone line. And, this is why the notion of “what we say and how we say it” are so significant to a recruiter hoping to make effective cold calls.

Recruiters can take a number of actions to enhance the likelihood of achieving success in their initial communications with candidate prospects, especially passive prospects. First and foremost, however, it is important to define what actually constitutes a successful call. Too often, recruiters define a successful cold call exclusively as one in which they are immediately able to convert a passive candidate prospect into an active candidate. In other words, success is defined entirely by the immediate outcome of the call, and “successful” calls occur only when a prospect acknowledges that he or she is open to considering new situations.

While some passive candidate prospects may be motivated to actively consider the marketplace upon receiving a recruiter’s call, many will not for a spectrum of very valid reasons. Regardless of whether a candidate prospect is open to the possibility of entertaining new employment opportunities, there is still great value to be derived by engaging these individuals in a dialogue, learning about them, and striving to nurture the basis of a long-term relationship. If treated well, many of these individuals could become very viable candidates at some future time. In the interim, however, they can serve as tremendous sources of market intelligence or on-target referrals.

Aside from simply redefining what constitutes a successful introductory call, recruiters can take several other steps to more effectively engage passive candidate prospects. Slowing down one’s rate of speech helps to ensure that the content of the message is received, while also reducing the likelihood of sounding “salesy.” Speeding through an introductory presentation to a prospect on a cold call is far less likely to engender the desired result. All of us are equipped with a mental rolodex of experiences that we subconsciously tap into when engaging other people. We know when we are being “sold,” and we typically respond by putting up our guard. By controlling the rate at which we speak, there is a much

greater opportunity to actually get our message across without the recipient of our call being predisposed to terminate the discussion and get off the phone.

Recruiters can also upgrade the actual language that they use when communicating with a prospect for the first time. As was discovered by the renowned psychometrician, Johnson O'Connor in the 1930's, an individual's vocabulary level is the best single means of predicting occupational success *in any career or profession*. Additionally, vocabulary is not a fixed asset and can be expanded by anyone. This is not to say that a sales presentation should be overly verbose or employ language that complicates selling messages, but rather to suggest that using language to clearly and eloquently convey selling messages absolutely can make a difference in how a recruiter is received.

In addition to being more thoughtful with respect to what they are saying, recruiters who project poise, confidence, and a solid appreciation for the market sector they serve are also more likely to present themselves in a professional manner that resonates with prospective candidates. It is also important for recruiters to listen more than they talk. By making the call about the prospective candidate and that individual's needs, a recruiter can begin to build rapport while also understanding what might truly compel a prospect to entertain the possibility of making a change. And lastly, it is important that recruiters practice the delivery of their introductory calls. A recruiter with an effective and fluid delivery style is much more likely to find a receptive prospect on the other end of the phone. A choppy or convoluted delivery style dramatically diminishes the quality of a recruiter's initial presentation.

Executing a thoughtful and effective introductory call is something that takes time to master, but being cognizant of Dale Carnegie's observation regarding "what you say, and how you say it" will not only help to distinguish today's recruiter in the eyes of prospective candidates, but will also favorably impact the results that a recruiter is able to achieve in this critical area of recruiting. ♦

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