

Take the COLD out of Cold Calling...

PPB Magazine

By Cliff Quicksell, MAS+

For those unique few that relish the opportunity to venture out and cold call, well, my hat goes off to you. I for one, really hate cold calling, perhaps it's the fact that I hate rejection (I believe I was scared by my first love at age 3, Margaret, I've never lived that down) or perhaps it's that I am lazy about that, truth is I just hate it. Even though I despise doing it, as sales professional I realize it is an imperative tool in your ability to keep the pipeline full of potential clients and opportunities.

So as a salesperson, and one who does not like the actual cold calling process, I need to find additional methods of cold calling with which I was comfortable. So I attended heaps of seminars and workshops delivered by the Mary Ellen Hudicka's and Jeff Tobe's of the promotional products world and gleaned much about this great industry and how to more "effectively" market myself using the same medium that I preached that my clients should use. However I took it a step further and quite frankly, so did my clients and many of my peers to their collective success and more importantly, profitability.

While there is nothing wrong about handing out calendars, pens, etc, taking these items, creating a theme, developing unique packaging and delivering that message in a creative way had more impact for me as a distributor then just randomly handing out products. It managed to raise the bar as it were to give potential and existing clients a broader view of how to effectively use promotional products in a different (not better) way. Creating these unique door openers helped me bridge my distain for cold-calling and opened up a whole new avenue from which I could work and sell.

Let me share a few examples: In an effort to reach on-hundred and thirty-five new potential accounts, I created a direct marketing piece that encompassed a Swiss-army knife, a magnet and a custom creative box. The outside of the box had some creative copy printed on it that drew the recipient inside the piece, when the piece was opened it folded out to reveal a six function Swiss-army knife fully opened in the center. Around the outer borders was copy that spoke about the company, quotes form my clients and the right panel actually was perforated with a magnet

attached to the back of the board, thus making the package more functional, that portion once removed became a magnet with all of my company's reference information that the client could display on a metal cabinet. The unique aspect of this piece was that each of the parts of the knife were described in detail as it related me, my services and company to the function of a knife. For example: The Key Ring: There and available, always when you need me. The Toothpick: "We pick and probe to find the right promotional products that make you smile" The Knife: "Always on the Cutting Edge of technology... and so forth. These pieces were sent out to 135 prospects in hopes to get their attention and perhaps entice them to give me a call or at least be memorable enough that they would take my call when I rang them. All in all it had nearly an 85% response rate.

Another one went like this... I sent a package of a small pizza box, a customized pizza cutter laser engraved with the recipient's name. The copy read on the outside: "Sometimes a slice of creativity..." and then inside the box, "...is all it takes, another hot creative from Cliff Quicksell, MAS"; additional copy printed inside the top of the box stated, "I'll bet you're wondering what this is all about, NO we do not sell pizzas but we do sell hot creative ideas and we would like to get a slice of your promotional budget..." The boxes, and pizza cutters were delivered by a Domino's pizza delivery pizza guy along with a medium cheese pizza, one at a time, twelve consecutive business days in a row, of the twelve prospects, twelve appointments were made, seven closed sales and \$27,000.00 in new initial business was written, all told, the R&D, pizza cutters, embellishment, pizza, delivery and tip cost about \$20.00 each, and the results were worth it.

Due to the success of this promotion a subsequent program was designed this time using coolers, ice cream, spoons, napkins and bowls. Eighteen soft-sided coolers with an additional zippered top were created; inside the cooler was a half gallon of ice cream packed in ice. In the top, were ten bowls, napkins and spoons all with the theme of the program. Attached to the handle was a hang tag which revealed the theme of the program..."The Ultimate Cold Call". I would select a potential client, go to the store, fill the cooler with ice and a half gallon of ice cream and walk in

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the door and say to the receptionist, "Hi, I have something here for Mr. Marty Guthrie, he may be expecting it", (knowing full well he wasn't) and then I would thank them and leave. I would no sooner get into my care and I would get a call from the recipient. Of the eighteen sent I receive 18 positive comments and secured 14 initial appointments, again not bad, but making my cold-call experience rather warm.

So for those of you who love cold calling the old way – GOD SPEED to you, for those of you who are like me and find it a bit challenging, lend your hand to a few different creative ways to get in the door, remember, as long it does not hurt anyone, emotionally, physically or spiritually, the gloves are off, your aim is to get results. So, take the cold out of cold calling, if you choose and enjoy the results from creative cold calling.

Continued success - Cliff