
Business English/Topics/Cold Calling

The cold call

Cold calls are telephone calls to anyone that you do not know and have not spoken with before. We often make cold calls to try to establish business contacts; to get a job, find a new client, seek someone else's services, or initiate any other business relationship. Following are some tips on how to make effective cold calls.

Planning the call: Establish your objectives & prepare the conversation

Plan your call. This requires a conscious effort to sit down, think, and plan out what it is you want to achieve with the call. After you determine your goals, go over them in your mind until they are very clear to you.

Then, imagine how a conversation might be with the person or business that you plan to call. Rehearse it in your mind and get ready to give a quick and confident presentation of your ideas. Prepare yourself so that you do not stutter or hesitate; you should know exactly what it is you want to say, and be able to say it backwards and forwards. Decide how you want the conversation to flow.

General goals to have for a cold call are to establish contact. You will want the person to remember you the next time you call, and have positive feelings towards you. Plan for the call to be as short as possible and focus on setting up an appointment. All negotiation or in-depth talking should take place later, when you are with the other party in person.

Just before the call: Prepare your mind and body for a positive attitude

You may not realize it, but the position of your body influences how your mind works, what hormones are flowing through your veins, and ultimately, how others perceive you. This is true when you talk with someone face to face as well as over the phone. The reason is that your physical state affects your mental state: your thinking, your attitude, and your voice. Remember that your voice is your only tool to communicate your ideas over the telephone. How can you prepare your body? Make the call sitting down in a chair and leaning slightly forward. This puts you in a state for a positive attitude. Then smile. The person on the other end of the line will be able to hear it. Making the call: Be brief, be polite. When you are duly prepared, pick up the phone and dial. Identify yourself confidently by name and ask if the person has a moment to take your call. It is possible that the person is in a meeting or is otherwise unable to talk with you at the moment, even if they answered your call. Be considerate and allow them to end the call immediately if needed.

Remember to be as brief as possible when calling. Your goal is not to chat up anyone, but rather establish contact and a specific time to meet. The person you are calling is a busy professional who would much rather be doing something productive than chewing the fat with strangers cold-calling them on the phone.

Ending the call: Finish with definite goals & confirm information

The end of the call is a time to be very concrete and confirm the next steps that you will take. Ideally this will mean an appointment to meet with the person you called. If the person is too busy to speak with you, set a specific time for you to call them back, for example five minutes, an hour, two days. If the time is excessively large, this is a clear signal that the person really has little interest in speaking with you. If you have set up an appointment, repeat the time and date, so there is no confusion.

When you say goodbye, do so quickly and confidently, thank the person for their time and repeat your name. It is possible that even in a short call the person has forgotten your name, and repeating it helps avoid awkwardness, and helps assure that they will remember it next time as well.

Based on a presentation by Edgar Flores, English student in Mexico City.

Business English lessons on cold calling

Business English Pod ^[1] has a series of free podcast lessons providing clear guidance on the techniques and language for cold calling in English:

Part 1 - Starting the cold call ^[2]

Part 2 - Clarifying benefits and making a pitch ^[3]

Part 3 - Dealing with objections and closing the call ^[4]

References

[1] <http://www.businessenglishpod.com/>

[2] <http://www.businessenglishpod.com/2007/05/09/bep-46-adv-cold-calling-getting-off-to-a-good-start/>

[3] <http://www.businessenglishpod.com/2007/05/13/bep-47-adv-cold-calling-clarifying-benefits-and-making-a-pitch/>

[4] <http://www.businessenglishpod.com/2007/05/16/bep-48-adv-cold-calling-dealing-with-objections-and-closing-the-call/>

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