

# My Top 10 Ridiculously **Easy** Ways to Generate **Hot Leads**

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I hope I haven't got you here under false pretences...

The truth is I'm not offering you a secret formula of hot sales tips and techniques that will have customers springing up, waving money and begging you to do business with them. There are plenty of books on that subject already.

I'm talking a different game. *This is about helping people who love the work they do but hate selling it.* The reluctant salespeople. The people who want to win business without selling their soul in the process. I've found there's a set of attitudes and habits that are really *easy* to adopt, which make the difference between being unnatural and uncomfortable in your role as a seller of your business proposition, and being natural and fully at ease, as *selling* becomes an organic part of what you do.

## **Allergic Reactions**

Many people have an instinctive reaction when they hear somebody say, "**I'm in marketing**". We immediately think *advertising - garish ties, sharp suits and comedy glasses*. We might be feeling *manipulated*, the strains of the latest kiddie-snack jingle ringing in our ears as we try to get round the supermarket without succumbing to pester-power.

Worse is our reaction when confronted with somebody who says "**I'm in sales**". Unless you're '*in sales*' yourself, you're probably thinking, '*don't you go giving me the hard-sell. I'll resist you, I'll fight it, I will!*' Indeed professional salespeople across the country still struggle to escape the stereotypical 1980's image of the guy from the double-glazing company, the timeshare development or the used-car showroom.

But here's the rub. If you're in business, you are *in marketing*. If you're in business, you are *in sales*. For whoever you are, wherever you work, whether you own or manage a business, whether you're a solo-preneur or part of a partnership or company, *what you do is all about marketing and selling*.

But that's where it starts to get really horrible, because marketing and selling your business isn't just about feeling as though you have to be pushy and obnoxious. It's about the embarrassment of having the phone put-down on you, the dismay of getting not one single call in response to your advert. It's about the *crippling fear of rejection*.

So, you're in business and your job is to market and sell, yet you think marketing is a black-art and sales is a dirty word. You're all but paralysed by the fear of being rejected. *How do you think this might be affecting your ability to bring in business?*

## **The Natural Way**

I was employed as a professional salesperson and marketer for over 15 years. I've had many good years, quite a few great years, and yes, one or two pretty desperate years too. I know the elation of a magnificent win, the fear of rejection and the pressure of *needing* the next piece of business.



But I only really learned how to generate business *naturally and easily* – and enjoy doing it – when I began to work for myself. Since then I've worked consistently and with great satisfaction on projects that have come about because of the lessons I learned, that I want to share with you now.

*My Top 10 Ridiculously Easy Ways to Generate Hot Leads* isn't about applying yourself to one task or another – making 50 calls a day or writing 100 letters a week. It's about getting into the right mindset and enjoying the ride. Because when you enjoy what you do and do it *naturally, warmly and with integrity*, you attract the people and the business you want. And why are they *ridiculously easy*? Well, what could be easier than *being yourself!* And that's where we start:

### **1. Be yourself**

Do you feel you have to steel yourself to get started on the process of selling? Do you, for example, have to take a big, deep breath before entering a room full of fellow businesspeople at a networking event? How do you feel in the moments before you pick up the phone to get started on a list of cold calls? Are you trying to twist and bend yourself into something or somebody you're not? Does it make you nervous? Of course it does! That's because we instinctively know that if we're not being ourselves, we stand every chance of being *exposed!*

People innately sense when you aren't being yourself – when you're trying too hard, or forcing yourself to be something you're not. Your body language will betray you too – with shallow breathing, a tense voice or sweaty palms for example. And if you're not being yourself, what is saying to your prospect, about what you're selling? *Maybe... that it too is not what you're making it out to be.*

You've probably heard the saying before: *People buy from people.* The most important thing your potential buyer needs from you is *integrity*. They need to feel able to believe and trust you, to feel comfortable buying from you. And they'll feel that when they see you *being yourself.*

So if you're naturally shy and quiet, don't try to hide it with loudness or over-bearing gestures. Don't try to fit an image of how you think a salesperson *should* behave. Don't try to know everything. Be yourself, because that's quite good enough. Your *enthusiasm and passion* will be infectious and your customers will find your honesty and openness refreshing. When you're being yourself, you build relationships more easily, you're taken into confidence and you may learn important things about your buyer's purchasing needs.

## 2. Know what you want

A vital foundation stone when you're in pursuit of Hot Leads, is to know what you want. Have a very clear idea of what sort of business you're looking for, and you'll know the instant you spot it. Have no idea at all, and Hot Leads will pass you by and you won't even notice. Make sure you have worked out:

(a) **What sort of people you want to welcome into your network of business associates.** These will be people whose own business brings them into contact with the sort of people you do business with. Meet one such person, and they could introduce you to a dozen new Hot Leads.



(b) **What sort of people you want your friends, associates, current customers and suppliers to be able to introduce you to.** What sort of companies – what's their typical size, location, turnover, headcount, industry sector, for example? What sort of individuals – if in business, what role or position do they hold? If a consumer, what is it about their home, tastes or lifestyle that identifies them as a potential customer?

Be prepared to get really specific. If you want to meet the Sales Director of Hot Prospect Plc, then be prepared to ask whoever you know, if they know somebody who could get you an introduction. When you get as specific as this about your requirements, you'll be surprised at how *easy* you make it for people to be able to help you. I was at a networking event once where somebody stood up and asked for an introduction to a business leader they particularly wanted to meet, only to find out that they'd been sitting around the same table as their target's brother-in-law!

## 3. Know what you're selling

The key to effective marketing is to have a clear proposition, with clear benefits, which solves an identifiable problem that a group of individuals or businesses experience.

Understand clearly what it is you're selling and what benefits it offers your customers. Be able to articulate this clearly and succinctly, and again, you make it *easy* for your potential customers to identify *themselves*.

- (a) **The short version:** Find a short, catchy way to explain what you do and who you do it for, that makes those potential customers immediately think, "*that's me!*" Think 20 words or less – it doesn't have to explain everything about what you do, it needs to be *easy to remember* and *easy to relate to*. Mine is: *I help people who love what they do, but hate selling it.*
- (b) **The what-next version:** Once you've got somebody's attention with your catchy 'memory hook', you've *earned the right* to another few seconds of their time. Don't be stuck for words when somebody says, "that sounds interesting, tell me more..." You probably have no more than 30 seconds at that point, so use them wisely. Highlight a couple of key benefits of your product or service and then engage your potential new customer or useful network contact with an open question. It shows you're more interested in *them* than in what you're selling and it begins the process of building a fruitful relationship.

#### 4. Do what you enjoy

There are many ways to market and promote yourself, your products and services. Conventional wisdom says you must build a *marketing mix* to reach your prospects through a number of different activities – advertising, direct mail, telemarketing, press and publicity and networking, for example. This *is* good advice, especially if you have a team of marketers and a generous budget. But if you work solo or run a small business and do all the marketing and selling yourself,

there are other considerations. I believe the most important of these is to focus on *doing the marketing you enjoy* – the activities you can do *naturally and effortlessly*, with minimum discomfort and *maximum enthusiasm*.



If you get up in the morning, knowing you've committed to a day of cold-calling on the telephone, how does it make you feel? Excited, energised and raring to go? Or depressed, miserable and desperate to do *anything* but drag yourself to the phone?

So if you hate making cold calls, *don't make them!*

There's no Book of Marketing Rules that says you *must* personally make cold calls in order to stay in business! And let's be honest – if you don't like doing it, it'll take you all morning to make three calls and it'll be nothing but a waste of valuable time.

Take a look at yourself and how you work – are you confident and effective on the phone, or are you better in writing, or face-to-face, or on-line? Do you love giving presentations, or hate it? Do

you revel in the chance to speed-network with 100 people you've never met before or do you prefer a quiet one-to-one? Does it take you two minutes or two hours to draft a mailshot or a brochure? Are you Twitter-tastic, or a Facebook fan?

If there's something you can't face doing, you have *choices*:

- (a) **Hire somebody to do it for you.** Full-time or part-time, office or home-based, today's flexible working patterns could mean there's an ideal candidate out there for the job you don't want to do.
- (b) **Outsource it to an agency or external specialist.** The growth in outsourcing continues as experienced specialists depart the big-company scene and set up niche services specifically to support the smaller business. Buy a few hours of specialist time when you need it.
- (c) **Find a training course or get a coach.** Build your skill and confidence and something that used to be a chore could become a pleasure.
- (d) **Don't do it!** Use *other ways* to get in touch with your prospects.

The most important thing about marketing your business is to *do it*, continually. You need constantly to be connecting with your prospective customers. Force yourself to market in ways you don't like, and you'll make excuses and procrastinate and ultimately do nothing. And if you do nothing, how will your customers find you?! Enjoy what you do, and do what you enjoy. Then, critically, you *will* do it, and those new customers *will* come!

## 5. Raise your energy levels

It's easy to make heavy work of developing your business – to see yourself on a treadmill, with overheads to cover or staff to pay. Maintaining your own energy levels and motivation becomes important, because without energy and motivation, your efforts at generating Hot Leads will become lacklustre and ineffective.

- (a) **Stay in touch with the 'why' of your business.** Remind yourself why you're in business – what do you value, that is supported by your being in business? Perhaps a loving family, your children's education, a beautiful home, your health, independence, a sense of accomplishment, a lifestyle that gives you opportunities to travel or to support causes dear to you. Whatever it is, stay in touch with your own personal motivation.
- (b) **Reward yourself.** Take the occasional unplanned day off, treat yourself to a round of golf, a good lunch with a friend or colleague, a manicure, a walk in the park - whatever makes you feel good will raise your energy levels.



- (c) **Remember to appreciate the simple things too.** A sunny day, good music, playing with the kids, walking the dog. Whatever the pressures of your business, there is *always* enough time to ‘stop and smell the roses’.

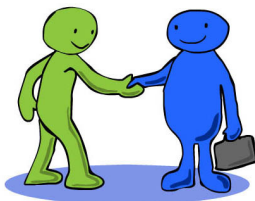
## 6. Give to receive

One of the easiest ways to generate business is to be a *giver* of business. There’s no more sure-fire way of getting people to begin looking for business for you, than if you find a great referral for them, or introduce them to somebody they’ve been dying to meet. You build a solid connection with them and you demonstrate your trust and confidence in them, and in the services they offer. Most importantly, you make them *want* to help you – to return the favour!

Who do you know, whom you trust and whose work, products or services you admire? Is there anybody else within your circle of family, friends, colleagues, customers, suppliers or associates who is on the lookout for something they provide? In being the *connector* between two individuals, you strengthen your ties with both.

## 7. Nourish your network

That brings me on to the other side of the networking picture. Myriad books have been written on effective networking and the world of commerce is always spawning new ways of growing and nurturing your network. The reason? Networking is probably the single most powerful way to generate Hot Leads – people who are ready to buy, who have been referred to you by somebody they trust.



Whether you begin with a formal network like The Athena Network, BNI, BRE or 4Networking, or your own informal network of former colleagues and associates, your potential for gaining referrals is huge. To start with, your *direct* network may contain a few dozen or a few hundred contacts – people you yourself know in your business and personal life. Your *indirect* network is where the fun really starts - it will contain *thousands* more contacts. For each member of your direct network has a direct network of their own – that’s your *indirect* network. And every one of those thousands of individuals has the potential to be a door-opener or even a sizzling *Hot Lead* for you. All you have to do is *ask* for what you want – what sort of introductions, what sort of referrals – with the sort of open question that gets people thinking....

“Who do you know, who....”

There are several formal business networking organisations you can join to help you build your network of trusted associates. But it’s not all about formal networking. Take a few minutes to write down a few categories of contacts, and identify what kind of a network you already have. You might be surprised at how many people you know, and if you take the time to help them

where you can, and get assertive about asking them who they know who could help *you*, they could all be working for you as your extended sales team in no time.

## **8. Ask for testimonials**

There's nothing an indecisive prospect likes more than the comfort of knowing that other people have had a good experience with you, your products and your services. Turning an enquiry into a Hot Lead can be as simple as providing them with the reassurance that they're in safe hands – and that reassurance can come *easily* from the testimonials of your satisfied customers.

Every time you do good work for a customer, get a testimonial from them. Don't be afraid to ask – if you've done a good job, they'll be happy to oblige. And if you've in any way fallen short of their expectations, you're better off knowing, as it'll give you a chance to repair the situation – before you ask again for their testimonial!

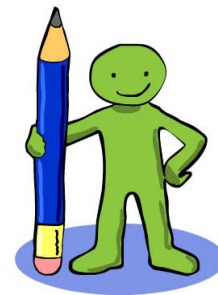
Display your testimonials too. On your wall if you have an office, shop or consulting room that people visit, or in a folder that you can show to people. Put them on your web site and use quotes from your customers (with their permission, of course) in your publicity material. It all builds confidence and reassurance in your prospects.

## **9. Stay in touch**

Your hottest Hot Leads can come from the most unexpected of sources – sometime prospects who, for whatever reason, didn't buy from you the first time around. Perhaps they bought from a competitor; perhaps they didn't buy at all.

But you've stayed in touch. With their permission, you've added them to your database and now you send them something of interest every few weeks – your new brochure, news on new products, case studies on satisfied customers, an invitation to a business event.

In doing so, you become a contact of value (but avoid *overdoing* it and becoming a nuisance!). You build credibility and integrity and make your contact feel as if they know you. And when the buyer wants to look again, or the competitor product or service fails to delight, you will be top of their list.



Current customers, past customers, old leads that never turned into business, people who have moved on from positions with existing customers – keep in touch with them all. In building a database and establishing a contact programme to communicate in a low-key but regular way with these different groups of people, you continue to remind them how you can help them, and over time, this database will deliver up its Hot Leads.

## **10. Be on the alert!**

If you're being authentic and true to yourself; if you know what you want, and you know what you're offering and how it benefits your would-be customers; if you're motivated, doing what you enjoy and are prepared to work at your people contacts and actively look out for ways to help them; if you stay in touch and your customers sing your praises, there's just one more thing.

Hot Leads come from everywhere and anywhere, so be alert to every opportunity, even when you're 'off duty'. Some of my best client contracts have come through neighbourhood chats, drinks with friends, odd remarks overheard on a night-out. Never be afraid to engage somebody in a conversation which might open the door to a Hot Lead. Once you're *being yourself*, it is just a conversation. You're not *talking shop* or *selling*, you're showing interest, building relationships and nurturing your network. That's when you'll get Hot Leads coming to you and you'll find yourself wondering what you've done to deserve them!

So there you have it – and none of this is difficult! Be.... Authentic.... Open.... Professional.... Confident.... Natural..... Helpful.... Clear.... Precise.... Be prepared.... Be alert.... But above all: *Be Yourself!*

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**About the author:**

*Julie Lawford works with small and medium-sized businesses who want to create high-impact communications and build profitable customer relationships. Julie is a qualified and experienced marketing specialist who loves helping people who love what they do, but hate selling it. To find out more, contact Julie via her web site [www.julielawford.co.uk](http://www.julielawford.co.uk).*