

10 Ways To Find More Prospects - *How to achieve sustainable performance in sales.* by David R Ednie

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by David R Ednie, President & CEO, SalesChannel Europe SARL

Introduction: Have you ever wondered why some people in sales are always over quota while others seem to be always behind plan? Why are some people highly successful in sales while others aren't? There are plenty training programs and books on "How to close the sale", "Negotiate to Win", etc. So why do we see such wide variations in people's success in sales today? Are some sales people just naturally better closers than others? Yes, maybe. But I believe that there is something much more important going on here. In fact over the last 25 years working in sales I have seen something very different which I believe is the foundation of success in sales.

Let's consider the basic steps in the sales process:

1) Identification of an opportunity, 2) understanding the customer's needs, 3) making a proposal, and 4) negotiation and close. Traditional sales training tends to focus on negotiation and closing and conventional wisdom tells us that success in sales = ABC Always Be Closing. If you can double your closing rate you will increase your sales by 100%. Question: Is this really possible and can it be done in a sustainable way? I think not.

So what is the real key to success in sales today? The answer lies at the start of the sales process: Step 1) Identification of an opportunity or prospecting. By simply finding more prospects you will dramatically increase your success in sales. If you double the number of prospects and hold your closing rate constant, you will double the number of sales you make.

So the secret to success in sales is ABP ***Always Be Prospecting.***

1. Conferences, Exhibitions & Trade Shows.

Conventional thinking in prospecting says use all the traditional approaches such as Newspapers, Magazines, Journals, Periodicals, Reviews, Newsletters, etc. My experience has shown me that conventional approaches produce very conventional results, which are usually inadequate to transform your success in sales today. Here is one very ***simple technique*** that I use and have found very successful. It is easy to do, inexpensive and it works. Try it and see how many qualified prospects you can identify for an investment of 3 hours of your time.

Conferences, Exhibitions & Trade Shows. Participate in as many of these events as you can. Industry Events that are for your target customers or related to your target customers business are a prospector's gold mine. Simply

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spend time there talking to people. Talk to everyone that you can. From conference attendees, to people that you meet during coffee breaks, to Conference Speakers and Panelists. At Exhibitions and Trade Shows talk to exhibitors, sales people on exhibitor booths and people you meet on the exhibition floor. Sales people are dying to tell you about what they do, their company and their products. Let them sell to you. Learn from them about their industry, the key Industry Players, their sales arguments, their positioning and whenever possible find out their PAIN points. You will go home with a rolodex of business cards. The Exhibitor Catalogue is a prospector's bible.

2. The Magic of Networking

In fact prospecting is **networking with a purpose**. To be a successful networker you need to meet as many people as you can, have a clear objective in mind for each meeting and have an "n + 1" belief system. That is never expect to be talking to someone who is directly a prospect for your products or services, but be sure that person will know at least one person who is a potential prospect. And it is this person that you want to make contact with, meet and ultimately make a your proposal to.

How do I become good at networking? Firstly, I suggest

that you join one or two networking groups such as business groups or business luncheons, eg. Lunch @ Circle, business clubs, associations, special interest groups, eg. Toastmasters International, School or University Alumni's. Secondly, start a file of meeting participant and keep updating it regularly. Thirdly, make a conscientious effort to keep your network active by maintaining regular contact and expand it with new contacts. Find ways to add value to your contacts by thinking of ways that you can help them. 'Give before you get' is the mind-set for success in networking. Your effort will be rewarded generously over time. Finally, make it a habit.

3. Networking on the Web

Today we all have access to an extraordinary range of powerful web based tools to search out opportunities and prospects. You can use web search tools with laser precision to target new prospects. You can **google your way to anyone**. In addition you can search extremely effectively for example by searching Industry and Association Websites or Networking Websites, such as Linked-in, OpenBC, or Viaduc.

Maximise your chances of success. Recently I ran a search in Linked-in of all people in High Tech, based in Paris, and ordered them

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based on the number of people in their personal networks. My goal was to meet those individuals with the largest personal networks because they can introduce me to greatest number of their contacts ('n+1 thinking'). Several weeks ago, on a flight from Stockholm to Paris I sat next to the French Country Manager of OpenBC, Yann Mauchamp. Yann is a professional and takes his business very seriously. He has over 3,500 people in his personal network of professional contacts. Now that's the sort person that I want to know. With friends like this, being a prospecting machine has never been easier.

4. Speeches and Public Appearances

Here is one of my favorite prospecting ideas, which I have used successfully for many years and I can assure you that it works. Create leads by making speeches and other public appearances. This requires becoming a subject matter expert in your chosen field. This is easier than you may think. Chose an area of interest that you are knowledgeable and passionate about, or chose an area of interest that you clearly know more about than most people. Then accept every opportunity you can get to address a group, speak on your subject, be part of a panel, or participate in a discussion group, etc. It's all high visibility exposure

and that is exactly what you're looking for.

People will come up to you afterwards and give you their business cards. This is reverse psychology at its best. After you have spoken to a group you are no longer the same person. You have been transformed into an expert, a guru, somehow you have become super human. This makes everyone want to meet you, talk to you, and get your business card. Take plenty with you. Use this technique to create pull, rather than push. So put the odds in your favor. You'll have people truly hoping that you will contact them as a result of your brief exchange of business cards.

5. Leverage Your Client's Supply Chain

The idea here is to prospect amongst your client's customers, suppliers, partners or competitors. In other words, look for sales opportunities in your client's "business eco-system". Let me give you 3 simple examples of how you can do this.

Client's Customers: Suppose that one of your customers supplies their services to the maritime shipping industry. Your company sells a software solution for Human Resource Management that is perfect for managing the crewing of large maritime fleets. Ask your

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client for an introduction to 3 of their largest maritime shipping customers.

Client's Suppliers: Another one of your clients uses PCs from a major PC manufacturer. Your HR management system runs most economically and reliably on certain configurations of that hardware manufacturer's machines. Ask your client for an introduction to that Hardware Vendor, then propose your solution to the Hardware Vendor's channel partners as a turn-key solution to meet their customer's HR Management needs.

Client's Competitors: Your client's competitors are also excellent targets for you to prospect. Often they have the same or similar business problems and you have firsthand experience of how your solution helps solve these problems. In addition to being an established supplier in their sector, you have a reference customer who is a respected competitor.

Navigate your client's supply chain and you will uncover a gold mine of prospecting opportunities for your products and services.

6. Leverage the network of contacts and industry knowledge of Journalists

Journalists are well connected and knowledgeable about a lot of things that are of interest to you and your

business. They have a high level view on what is happening in your field and they always know a lot of important people. The sort of key people that you would like to know! Because Journalists speak to industry leaders, thought leaders in your sector, your competitors and even your customers you need to get close to them and make them part of your 'virtual team'

Interview a Journalist. Yes, use deviant thinking and reverse the conventional roles. How? Invite a Journalist to participate on a conference panel that you are organizing. Ask them to present an industry overview or speak about future trends or challenges that your industry is facing. Why? 1) This gives you credibility because they are seen as an independent thought leader. 2) He/she will talk about you and your business to others afterwards.

Get them to talk about you and your business. Invite or sponsor a Journalist to moderate an industry seminar or a customer event. Or ask them to speak about customer's problems and solutions that are available today. Or ask them to present a specific case study. You and your solution will be associated with the Journalist's presentation and remarks.

7. Using Referrals

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The best way to approach someone who you don't yet know is via someone they already know. This is type of approach is known as a using a 'referral'. A good referral gives you privileged access to an open minded audience. When you contact someone via a referral you automatically have the same trust and respect that the person who gave the referral has. Make the most of this when describing your proposition or presenting your idea. Your success in sales is directly tied to the number and quality of referrals that you can generate.

How do you get referrals?

Simple, you ask for them. Everyone that you meet is ready and willing to give you referrals – if you only ask. How you ask determines the number and quality of referrals you get. Here is a simple example: At the end of your next client meeting ask: "Can you suggest 2-3 colleagues of yours that may have the same needs or concerns as you?" Then ask: "Can I mention your name and refer to our discussion when I contact them?" 1) Write down the name, title, company, phone number and email address for each referral. 2) Confirm that you are able to use your contact's name and make reference to your discussion. Example: "Mr. Smith, I was given your name by Mary Jones at 123 Ltd., who suggested that I contact you. My company is working with Mary to reduce in-store shop lifting and she thought that you would be

interested by the positive results she has obtained using our ABC anti-theft device in her 5 largest city stores." With an opening introduction like this you will capture your prospect's full and undivided attention and suddenly doors will be opened at all levels of your prospect's organization.

8. Leveraging Sporting and Corporate Events

A great way to meet new prospects is at events. Events ranging from school sports meetings to Corporate VIP hospitality events. **Being There.** Attend some local sporting events where you will meet other people with similar sporting interests or attend your kid's school sports events where you will meet other parents and from there you can get to new prospects using "n+1" thinking together with asking for referrals.

Corporate VIP Hospitality Events. These types of events are a wonderful opportunity to invite those prospects that you cannot easily get to meet. This is often the case when you are trying to meet senior management, busy and difficult to reach people who hold ultimate decision making responsibility. The idea here is to make the event so appealing and the invitation so prestigious that prospects will do anything to be able to participate. Examples include the International Tennis

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Grand Slam. eg. Roland Garros or Wimbledon, the F1 Grand Prix, the UEFA Cup, or the Rugby World Cup. Now, be sure to invite as many VIP prospects and VIP customers as you possibly can. Existing customers can discuss their experience working with you and your company and give "spontaneous testimonials" to your invited VIP prospects. Give your prospects a VIP invitation to a high profile event and you will always be remembered. Even if they cannot make it or decline your invitation, you have set up reciprocity for later use.

9. Getting Recommended

Without doubt the single most effective way that I know to find new prospects and win new business is to be recommended. Being recommended by someone puts you in an extremely privileged position. Firstly you don't need to sell yourself or your services as this has already been established and accepted. You simply need to conform to the picture of you and your capabilities that was painted by the person who recommended you. Then start a 'diagnostic conversation' to uncover the prospect's problem(s). Get him/her talking about what is not going well, what is off track or is in some way causing him or her a problem. You are like a dentist "probing for PAIN". The greater the PAIN the greater

the size of the sale. No PAIN, no GAIN!

How do you get yourself recommended?

Use every opportunity you get to talk about what's in your BAG. What? Yes, whenever you meet someone you need to explain your **Blessings, Achievements and Goals (BAG)**. For example: *I am very lucky. I have several large clients right now who are keeping me extremely busy (B). I have just completed a very successful client installation of our new Mobile Business Messaging service that allows their field sales people to stay connected with the office when they are on the road. They really love automatic synchronization of email, automatic updates to meetings and changes to their agendas (A). Based on this success I now plan to introduce this solution at Group HQ. They have over 1,000 people who are travelling constantly. They could gain even bigger savings in time and increases in efficiency (G).* So, show everyone your BAG and soon they will be recommending you to their associates, colleagues and friends.

10. Never Eat Alone

This has got to be one of the most productive and enjoyable, yet least used methods of prospecting that I know of. This is the quickest way to get to "privileged conversations" with a real exchange of information

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and ideas. I have found that people are far more open, honest with you and direct when they are relaxed and enjoying a nice meal.

Ask questions about them. The secret to being a good conversationalist and getting people to talk openly with you is very simple. *Talk about them.* Ask questions about them, about what they do, about their families, about what they like/dislike and about their concerns. Your sincere interest will be rewarded with information that is rich in fact, opinion, emotion and prospecting potential. Make them part of your network by building the foundation of a long relationship that you can come back to in the future.

Gain Industry and Market Intelligence. Ask them what they know about your areas of interest: eg. Market trends, industries, sectors, customers, projects and people. Ask who else do they know amongst their colleagues, associates and friends who may have the same interests, concerns, problems, etc. Always try and get 3 referrals before coffee. Do this right and you will come away with the equivalent of thousands of Euros worth of industry knowledge and market data, plus 3 referrals and a friend for life for a total investment of a 50€ lunch. That's got to be the best ROI that I know of! Lets assume that most people eat 3 meals a day and that most people work 5 days per week. That

means that you have 15 opportunities to eat with someone per week. Set yourself a goal of: 2 lunch meetings, 1 breakfast meeting and 1 dinner per week. Start planning your agenda now!

Good Luck and remember
Always Be Prospecting.

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For more information and to arrange a call or personal meeting to discuss your team's sales performance, contact me on +33 676 600 925.



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