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« Back | Forward »

Go to date: Go

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- Saturday, May. 14, 2011
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« Back

Go to date: Go

Search Notices: Go



Home > Article

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Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

When Hot Prospects go Cold

LORI TURNER-WILSON

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A prospect calls indicating a strong need for what you're selling. You meet with them, identify they are a good fit for your firm, and develop a proposal for how you might work together. You pitch with perfection, see all the right buying signals, and then hear the dreaded words, "let me get back with you."

You're not panicked. After all, they seemed prepared to move forward. You follow up a few days after your meeting and get no response. Days stretch into weeks, and after several attempts at follow up, you're growing increasingly concerned and confused. Why has this hot prospect gone cold?

Often what happened is the pain that caused your prospect to pick up the phone and call is no longer the biggest pain. Life crept in and is diverting your prospect's attention. Not to worry. Unless your prospect was a tire kicker, he will likely warm up again.

Fortunately, there are steps you can take to shorten the time between initial interest and ink on a contract. The key is knowing how and when to stay in touch.

According to the National Sales Executive Association, 80 percent of new sales are made on or after the fifth contact. A whole host of other research indicates that about 85 percent of sales reps quit after making just three or fewer unreturned contacts. There lies the case for persistence – don't interpret lack of response as a "no."

Of equal importance is how you follow up. Get creative. Be smart. Make each of your five planned contacts count.

Instead of the email or phone follow up that every other sales rep uses, differentiate your follow up. Mix it up. Plan a variety of contact points to offer your prospect additional value and differentiate you.

Consider a three-dimensional mailing, such as an educational or inspirational book. Consider hiring a courier to deliver that package straight into your prospect's hands for maximum effect.

A quick, simple strategy is a handwritten note. It's a lost art, but if done well, demonstrates your thoughtfulness. Make sure it doesn't sound templated; comment on a specific aspect of your last meeting with your prospect. Keep your message short and mail it within 24 hours of your meeting.

Be willing to go the extra mile. Consider inviting your prospect to a special event or, better yet, send a new business lead their way.

After several unreturned contacts, consider calling your prospect before or after hours to ensure you get their voice mail. Script out and practice a voice mail message that explains you are concerned you're becoming a pest. Ask the prospect if you should stay or go. Explain that you genuinely

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RECORD TOTALS	DAY	WEEK	YEAR
PROPERTY SALES	65	65	5,298
MORTGAGES	56	56	8,174
FORECLOSURE NOTICES	0	0	4,404
BUILDING PERMITS	141	141	13,875
BANKRUPTCIES	73	73	6,624
BUSINESS LICENSES	26	26	2,359
UTILITY CONNECTIONS	130	130	8,933
MARRIAGE LICENSES	29	29	1,963



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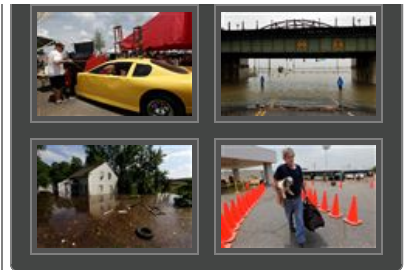
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from that the prospect is not interested in getting help, but they do believe you can solve their problem, but that ultimately it is their choice.

This strategy helps get you more quickly to a firm response – one way or the other. Don't assume that the answer is "no" until the prospect says so, but when they do, be thankful for the gift of clarity.

Lori Turner-Wilson is an award-winning columnist and managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing, www.redrovercompany.com. You can follow RedRover on Facebook and Twitter.



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