

## 5 Worst Cold Call “Openers”

By Al Davidson



If you are a home renovation do-it-yourselfer, you probably have a toolbox full of tools: tape measures, hammers and screwdrivers, that sort of thing. Some you bought, some you borrowed and forgot to give back, some you inherited, and some seem to have just appeared.

Most of those tools are probably decent and useful. But if your toolbox is like mine, there are maybe a half dozen tools that aren't very good. I've got a screwdriver whose head is stripped to the point of uselessness and a tape measure that doesn't retract. Unfortunately, I never think of buying new ones, I just keep using these ones even though they are ineffective.

Sales people face a similar situation with their lead generation conversation starters. Each opening line is a tool in their toolbox. Some are useful. Some are not. Are these tired, worn-out, and ineffective tools still in your lead generation toolbox?

1. How are you today?
2. I am not selling anything...
3. Do you have a few minutes?
4. I know you're busy but...
5. You don't know me but...

So, what's wrong with them?

“How are you today” only works once you know the person, but if you haven't introduced yourself, the prospect will be wondering who you are.

“I am not selling anything...” is a classic sales line that everyone knows is a lie. Sure, you may not be selling anything then, but you are selling the prospect on why they should trust you and the prospect knows that anyone who says “I am not selling anything” will eventually try to sell them something.

“Do you have a few minutes?” might be okay once you have a fantastic relationship with the customer and you've proven to them that you have their best interests at heart. But don't use it too early because no busy person has a few minutes. (And beware of those who do have a few minutes).

The same is true with “I know you're busy but...” – they are busy and you're interrupting them and this line simply highlights that fact.

“You don't know me but...” is simply stating the obvious. You might as well say “I'm a salesperson and I plan on selling you something.”

If these are the opening lines you're using, it's time to develop new ones. Your goal should be to not sound insincere, staged or robotic. Instead, open the conversation with a natural “real life”

conversation. For example, "Dave this is Michael Noonan calling from ABC Manufacturing, we provide medical device manufacturers with plastic injection molding services. I noticed on your website that you manufacture devices for the respirator industry".

Why is this solid opening?

- First, it's refreshing, particularly when the prospect has faced dozens of "I know you're busy but..." calls.
- Second, it states clearly who you are in a way that is approachable. It turns you into a fact-finder instead of a telemarketer.
- Third, it makes the prospect's next sentence "yes, we do that" instead of "I don't have a lot of time right now, what's this about?"
- Fourth, it positions you as a peer instead of yet another salesperson. You sound more like someone in an industry calling someone else in the same industry to discuss something, rather than trying to zing them with a clever opening line.

There may have been a time when these opening lines worked. In the same way, there was a time when my screwdriver tightened screws and my measuring tape retracted. But today, these tools are old and worn out and it's time to replace them with ones that work.

#### **About Al Davidson**

Al Davidson is the President and owner of Strategic Sales & Marketing (SSM), which he founded in 1989. Under Al's direction, SSM has designed and implemented new business development plans and programs for thousands of B2B companies nationwide. Since their inception, SSM's calling center has completed over 50 million new business sales presentations to high level decision makers and generated over 7 million sales leads. As a result, SSM has developed major account development expertise in the high technology, manufacturing and business service sectors. In addition, Al Davidson has 25 years experience in business-to-business (B2B) direct marketing, new business development consulting, sales force management, lead management, sales training, and B2B web marketing.