

The Unstoppable SalesSM Prospecting System

Earn Attention, Book Meetings, and Win New Business

Sample Chapter

Chapter 1: Why Are Prospects So Difficult to Reach?

Prospecting Today: Multi-Channel, Multi-Touch and Multidimensional

My first official job in sales was selling new and used cars back in the 90s (yes, I'm that old). Anyone looking to buy a car would invariably wind up at the dealership where I worked at one point or another. There was no internet, and email use was inconsistent, so the process was simple. A prospect looking for a car would see an ad either in their local newspaper, on television, or hear it on the radio, which would pique their interest. They had two choices if they wanted a General Motors product that we sold. Visit our dealership or a different G.M. dealership outside our small town. My job was to be ready when it was my turn, and a new prospect (an "up") would arrive in our parking lot or showroom.

As you can tell, no actual prospecting was required. Anyone considering buying a G.M. product would visit our dealership, where either one of the other sales agents or I would greet them and begin a conversation. The sales process we followed was simple but provided one challenge. Most people who visited the dealership had already met one of the other sales agents. Therefore, they would invariably ask to speak with someone else. The result? I was one of five sales agents walking the floor, which meant every fifth prospect was mine to approach. However, about 50% of these would ask to speak with one of the other agents, meaning I missed my turn. Therefore, I may only meet one or two prospects a day. There were even some days when I met none at all.

Being on the receiving end of taking any prospects available when it was my turn and being paid 100% straight commission was a difficult way to make a living, so I decided to take matters into my own hands. I realized that if I could get "ups" asking for me when they

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arrived, I would get most of the leads, but making this happen would require taking a different approach than the other sales agents. So I did what any young, hungry, and eager to get paid would do: I began prospecting.

I practiced common car sales prospecting strategies, like calling old leads to introduce myself, which is something many sales reps looking to build their book of business would do. However, I also practiced some not-so-common strategies. One, for instance, included making a flyer on my dot matrix printer (which shows you how long ago this was!), then identifying the neighborhoods that matched the demographic of our typical "ideal buyer," and then walking these neighborhoods to drop off flyers and introduce myself.

I deployed other strategies, like handing out business cards at local events and wearing company-branded apparel at social events, and the results were profound. Within three months of starting these efforts, people began showing up at our store and asking for me directly. Within five months, I was the top salesperson for the month, beating out those who had worked at the dealership for over ten years. Not bad results for a newbie.

I share this story with you because it provides some lessons, I learned years ago about prospecting that are just as relevant today.

1. You've got to be crystal clear about who you want to sell to and put all your prospecting efforts into reaching these people. If others show up eager to buy that don't match those criteria, fine, but keep your energy focused on those you want to sell to.
2. You've got to differentiate yourself from everyone else, vying for the attention of your ideal prospects if you want the opportunity to earn their attention. Attention is, after

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all, the first step in your sales process, and without it, no one will ever hear what you have to say.

3. You must avoid getting stuck using one method to prospect. Change is constant and sticking with one method that is working now may eventually stop working. You need an effective and repeatable system, and your efforts must be to continuously test new prospecting strategies to keep your prospecting fresh and ensure your stream of new prospects never dries up.

As you can tell from my example above, communicating with and selling to prospects in the 90's was straightforward. Compared to today, with many different communication channels and the internet, things are more complex and arguably more difficult. From the internet to social media, direct mail to email, in-person to virtual meetings, everything about how we get in front of our ideal prospects has changed, and technology continues to move the goalposts.

Let me plant this seed as a starting point for your journey to build your Unstoppable SalesSM Prospecting System. Everything about selling has changed, and yet nothing about selling has changed. The reality is that with all our prospects' technology and communication options, they are highly distracted. As a result, to sell today, you must begin by earning the attention of those you seek to sell to.

Attention is the Currency of Sales Success

An old saying asks if a tree falls in the forest, does anyone hear it? There are many answers to this age-old question, so here is mine. The reality is that trees fall daily, and neither you nor I hear them. However, if someone were to share with us through social media, email, video, or other channels a tree was about to fall or had fallen, like the National Christmas

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tree in Washington D.C. that toppled in November 2023, it would earn our attention (and essentially, we would hear it).

News media, for years, has perfected the art of gaining attention to make a sale. For example, have you ever noticed that if the press reports one plane crash, several others follow? The goal in news media is to earn and retain your attention using whatever channel they need to (i.e., radio, television, YouTube) so that they, in turn, can place products or services in front of you to encourage you to buy. In other words, attention enables them to sell. The more attention a media outlet can gather (i.e., more viewers, more readers), the more interest they get from advertisers who want to put their products and services in front of its viewers, and in turn, the more money they can charge to these advertisers.

What does all of this have to do with prospecting? You need to think like the news media. In other words, your priority when prospecting is to earn and retain the attention of those you want to sell to, the "ideal buyers" of your product or service. If you don't have their attention or can't earn it, then they don't know you exist, you can't build any trust, and they will likely buy from someone else.

Here's what's interesting. The more attention you earn, the greater your prospect will pursue you. You create a perception that you, your products, or services are the most common, most popular, and most needed solution in the market. In other words, more attention earned, when done correctly, provides you credibility with your ideal buyer.

Let me give you some examples:

Suppose you are considering purchasing a car and suddenly realize there are similar models of that exact vehicle everywhere you look.

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You may be planning a vacation to a tropical destination. As you tell others about your intended trip, you may encounter several people who have already visited the exact location (and you didn't know this beforehand).

You are considering installing an above-ground pool in your backyard and suddenly realize how many houses in your neighborhood have one.

You attend a concert (insert your favorite group, artist, or DJ here) and buy a T-shirt with their name on it. You notice how many people have similar T-shirts.

Our attention goes to the things most relevant to us at the time. This is known as the Frequency Illusion¹, a cognitive bias in which a person notices a specific concept, word, or product more frequently after recently becoming aware of it.

So, if you are looking for a new commercial insurance policy, a new corporate bank, a new office for rent, or a new piece of equipment, you will notice examples of these (and suppliers of these) everywhere you turn.

At this point, you might think, "But Shawn, earning attention is Marketing's responsibility." I agree with you to a point. Marketing promotes and attempts to draw attention to the company and its products. Still, since your goal is for prospects to connect with YOU, not your co-worker, inside sales, or your competitor, you need to start earning your prospect's attention. Refer to my earlier examples of how the frequency illusion works. If I'm looking to buy a Toyota Rav4, I might notice Rav4's all around me. What draws me to reach out to a sales professional selling Rav4s is when I become aware that they sell Rav4s (i.e., I receive a flyer with their name on it; find them on a YouTube channel talking about Rav4s). In other words, earning attention is so crucial to selling that it's NOT something you should leave up to Marketing.

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Later in the book, we'll discuss methods for garnering the attention of your prospects, but for now, know that this is the first step in your prospecting system. You must consistently earn the attention of those you want to sell to.

Rejection is a Sign That You Are onto Something

When earning attention becomes your primary focus for prospecting, you will invariably run into some barriers. Research by firms such as Gartner has suggested that most of a prospect's time before buying is spent doing their research using online sources. These can range from visiting websites, reading reviews, checking social media platforms, reviewing emails, etc. The problem this can create for you, however, is that it is much easier to ignore you, unsubscribe from your email, block you, or send you a "STOP" message when connecting with a prospect digitally. Let me give you an example.

Many years ago, I spoke at a franchise owner event, following which a franchisee approached me and said, "We need your help. Our sales are flat, and you have the formula we need." He then explained his situation and what help he presumed he needed. Considering we had both traveled to the event, we agreed to meet virtually two weeks later and even picked a date/time on the spot to connect. I sent him an invitation later that day.

A week before we spoke, I sent him a LinkedIn connection request with a personalized message: "Looking forward to our upcoming discussion, Bob." He didn't accept or acknowledge the message. A few days before we met, I also emailed him a simple message: "Looking forward to speaking on Thursday, Bob, I've re-attached the link for our discussion below." No response.

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The morning of our meeting, I sent a simple text message (he had provided his cell number to me when we met) saying, "Bob, I'm looking forward to our virtual meeting today at 10 am." I have yet to receive a response.

When 10 am arrived, I jumped onto Zoom and waited and waited. Bob was a no-show.

Herein lies the problem you will face. As referenced earlier, your prospects often conduct most of their research on your products or services virtually, requiring zero interaction with a real person. For some, this diminishes the sale to a transaction, in their mind, making it much easier for them to dismiss or brush you off. In other words, the continued trend towards using digital means to enable sales means that as a sales professional, you might begin to feel like you are simply taking orders and not influencing the sale.

In my example above, Bob's reaction is entirely my fault and has nothing to do with Bob. After my initial discussion with Bob, I assumed (and you know what that makes me) that our discussion was enough to convince Bob that investing his time to speak with me would be a good investment. I was wrong. Bob's challenge (which was trying to increase his sales) is something he had been researching before our chance meeting at the Franchise event. He likely continued research after hearing me speak, and as a result, as each day passed, the timeliness of my message aligning with his needs became less and less relevant.

What I should have done is presumed that our initial interaction only opened the door, and it was then my job to provide insights, perspectives and information to Bob that would assist in his likely quest to continue researching how to resolve his flat sales.

My second mistake was that I focused on confirming the call rather than adding value before the call. Following our initial conversation, I should have shared with Bob many valuable tools and resources that would immediately help his situation and reassure him

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that I had his answers (and that further research wasn't necessary). These might have included an assessment, a relevant book, or video tips to resolve or overcome his challenges (we'll discuss using value to convert a prospect later in the book).

But my biggest mistake was not confirming the meeting day and time, while I stood in front of Bob.

With this in mind, let's jump to Chapter 2, which you are likely eager to do—cold outreach. We will discuss transitioning from a pest to someone your prospect welcomes as a guest.

Unstoppable Sales Prospecting System Action Step:

What have you been doing to earn the attention of your ideal prospects? Take a few minutes to consider how prospects typically find you, and ask yourself, how can I replicate this to generate even more attention?

Notes:

[1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frequency_illusion) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frequency_illusion