

client: Management training firm
project: Write a white paper
objective: Shake up target audience (corporate sales forces) and get them to realize that networking is the way to go and that the client is the training firm to get them there

Helen
McCrone
portfolio

COPY EXCERPT

COMMENTARY

Frustrated by your Dismal Response Rate for Cold Emails?

The Solution to Landing Sales Appointments with VPs and CEOs

As a sales professional with fifteen years of experience under her belt, Linda keeps a sharp eye on the response rate to her prospecting emails. But she's worried. What used to be a respectable score is now shamefully low. Plus, her declining performance in qualifying prospects hasn't escaped the notice of her manager. He wants to know this:

Why are your cold emails to C-suite executives not resulting in face-to-face appointments, and what are you going to do to fix this problem?

Linda's concerned that she's losing her touch and may be in the wrong profession, but she should take comfort in the fact that she's not alone.

According to the latest survey by *Professional Sales Journal*, '82% of sales directors of B2B companies report that email prospecting is somewhat or significantly less effective than five years ago'¹.

The good news is there is a more successful way for sales professionals to reach VPs and CEOs: **Networking**.

Of course, like any other sales method, networking must be done *properly* to get the desired results.

This white paper will describe why email prospecting no longer works as it used to and produce evidence that senior executives are relying more and more on their networks to learn about new product and services.

Then it will present five networking skills that corporate sales teams need to master:

1. Targeting ideal prospects
2. Getting introduced
3. Making first contact
4. Requesting a meeting
5. Following up a meeting

Afterwards, it will introduce a unique three-step approach that can help your B2B sales team transition *quickly* from cold emails to networking.

It concludes by showing how one company increased its appointment-setting success by 18% using this innovative technique.

The title's job is to compel the target audience to download or read your white paper, so it needs to be engaging and spell out the benefits.

Keywords in the title and sub-heading help the white paper to be found on Google.

The opening anecdote identifies the target audience and creates a visual of the problem for the reader to identify with.

The synopsis style of the first page helps busy readers decide in advance whether your white paper will help them. It says, 'Here is the problem, and here is a clear path to the solution'.

Bullet points highlight key information and give a welcome relief for the eyes.

The brand name of the approach is deliberately not mentioned. The solution is described in generic terms to avoid turning the white paper into a sales pitch.

A case study from a happy customer provides third-party evidence, which is one of the most convincing proofs any B2B vendor can offer.

The two-column layout and use of white space makes the white paper much more readable.

¹ Professional Sales Journal: Survey on Prospecting Activities (2015)

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Meeting with Buyers is Harder Than Ever

Every sales professional recognizes the challenge of making appointments with new buyers, especially when it comes to getting a foot through the door of VPs and CEOs.

The trouble is, it's becoming harder and harder to make a pitch. A recent survey by *SoftwareCEO.com* reveals that only 7% of VPs and CEOs rely on cold calls and emails from sales people.²

So, what's the problem? You'd think the prospecting challenge would be less of a hurdle in the age of smartphones and tablets. But here's the rub...

The increase in digital communications that we're all exposed to these days is having a reverse effect. Consequently, prospecting and demand generation is becoming a struggle.³

The flood of inbound communications is surely something we can all relate to. According to Tellwise:

'The average buyer gets 100+ emails a day, opens just 23%, and clicks on only 2%.'⁴

It's no wonder that buyers are blocking or deleting emails from people they don't know. They, like the rest of us, are simply overwhelmed by emails and messages.

Clearly, blasting out sales emails to C-suite executives, who are constantly on the go and have little time or patience for dealing with an overflowing inbox, is a less-than-effective strategy. What worked reasonably well a few years ago, no longer does.

New Prospecting Strategies and Tactics are Called For

If buyers are ignoring unsolicited emails, how are they getting their information on new products?

Richardson, a global sales training and sales performance improvement company, says buyers are relying more and more on their trusted networks for information. Unsurprisingly, it recommends sales professionals adjust their prospecting strategies and tactics.

They need to be skilled in conducting 'a valuable and valued-needs dialogue' with buyers when the opportunity arises. They must also have the 'will, skill, and tools to be deeply prepared and understand their prospects' business'.⁵

That no one is answering the phone anymore and that email is throwing the dice is a view also expressed by the *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*:

'Networking, if done correctly, is fast becoming the most reliable means of getting that all-important handshake with a new prospect.'⁶

SoftwareCEO.com backs this up: 71% of VPs and CEOs rely on their professional networks to learn about new products, services and solutions.⁷

So why are 90% of sales forces at B2B companies still using email prospecting to get appointments?⁸ The evidence is clear: buyers, in particular senior executives, prefer speaking to people they *know* or who have been *referred* by someone they know.

[copy continues...]

Headings are used to indicate discrete parts of the white paper. They also provide a continuous story, giving the reader a quick overview of the argument.

The writing style is journalistic: there's no marketing speak and no hype. Clear copy with an unbiased tone is called for in a white paper.

Statistics eliminate vagueness, add credibility to your claims and get the reader's attention.

Footnotes are used to present the source of evidence, convey a formal tone and reveal how much research has gone into the white paper.

Notice how the text moves from the problem to the general solution. It is important to construct a sound, logical argument to back up the solution offered by the white paper.

The next pages would develop the argument and describe the client's solution in the same journalistic style.

The white paper would wrap up with a set of conclusions, a call to action and a positioning blurb.

This copy was written as an assignment during the 'How to Write White Papers' professional development program with Steve Slaunwhite. The client is a fictitious company.

² SoftwareCEO.com: Survey 'How CEOs Make Buying Decisions' (2014)

³ Richardson: Selling Challenges Study (2016)

⁴ Tellwise: An Ultimate Guide to Conversion Rates: A Must-Have Resource for Today's Sales Executives (2015)

⁵ Richardson: Selling Challenges Study (2016)

⁶ Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management: 'Are sales forces relying too heavily on email?' (Issue 92, 15-17)

⁷ SoftwareCEO.com (2014 survey)

⁸ Journal of Personal Selling (relying on email?)