

BEP 46 ADV – Cold Calling: Getting off to a Good Start

Hello again and welcome back to Business English Pod!

Today's episode is the first in a three-part series on cold calling, the skill of making unsolicited sales calls. Unsolicited means "not asked for." So cold calling is the skill of making a sales call to someone who is not expecting you.

Cold calling skills are very useful in many parts of business life. To cold call successfully, you need to be persuasive. And persuasion is fundamental to business success, whether you are trying to convince a customer to buy something or your boss or colleagues to accept your point of view.

A lot of people hate making and receiving cold calls; actually, a good cold call, when done persuasively, should be a welcome opportunity for the customer to get more value.

In today's listening you'll hear two examples, one bad one good. We'll listen to the bad one first. Josh Knight of Nexus Communications International is cold calling Linda Darling, who works for the law firm Drucker and Smythe. So Linda is Josh's prospect, or potential customer.

As you listen, try to identify at least **four things that Josh does wrong**. Also, try and identify what he is selling.

Vocabulary

unwieldy: difficult to use or handle.

prospect: potential customer

online collaboration tools: software that enables you to collaborate, that is to cooperate, with other people online, usually by sharing documents or looking at the same files.

productivity enhancing services: any service—often software—that helps to increase worker productivity.

video conferencing: remote meeting via video phone, where you can see the face of the people you are meeting with.

web conferencing: remote meetings that involve online collaboration tools (see above) allowing you to share documents, etc.

unsolicited: adj. not asked for. An unsolicited sales call is a cold call, one where the customer has not asked you in advance to call.

Dialog: BAD Example

Linda: Hello. Drucker and Smythe

Josh: Hello, is this Linda Darling?

Linda: Yes?

Josh: Hi, my name is Josh Knight from Nexus Services International.

Linda: Uhuh. And how can I help you?

Josh: We're a major global provider of online collaboration tools and productivity enhancing services that fully integrate audio and video with web conferencing. Our motto is "Nexus connects us."

Linda: I see. Look I really don't have time at the moment.

Josh: Well, Ms. Dayfield, depending on what you are currently using, I don't know whether you have a need or an interest in our services. But with your permission, I was hoping to ask you a few questions and see if there is anything we are doing that you can benefit from.

Linda: Look as I said I don't really have time right now.

Josh: So my first question is do you want to increase your productivity by up to 15% in one easy step?

Linda: No, not really. Bye.

Josh: But, with our patented Live Anywhere platinum online conferencing service, you can meet...Hello? Hello? Linda? Linda?

Debrief

It doesn't sound like Josh is going to make the sale, does it? Did you catch what he is selling? "Online collaboration tools and productivity enhancing services that fully integrate video and web conferencing." For definitions of these terms, you can check out the learner's notes for this episode, available in a few days on our website. How about what Josh does wrong? Did you pick out four things?

First, his voice is wrong, isn't it? He speaks too quickly and he even sounds a little nervous.

Second, his introduction is way too long and it is obviously scripted, like he is reading off of a piece of paper. This sounds fake and insincere.

Third, in addition to getting her name wrong at one point (he calls her "Ms. Dayfield" instead of "Ms. Darling"), he's not really listening to Linda at all, is he? She says several times that she is too busy, but he doesn't do anything to address her concern.

Finally—and this point may be less obvious—he fails to ask any questions to assess Linda's needs. The only question he asks—"Do you want to increase your productivity by up to 15% in one easy step?"—is a yes/no question. If Linda says "no," which she does, he has no way to move forward.

Now, let's listen to a better example. This time another sales representative, Steve Steele, will call Linda. He does a much better job. As you listen, try to answer the following questions. The answers will be posted in a few days at www.businessenglishpod.com.

1) Does Linda's company use audio and video conferencing?

2) What is the benefit of the service that Steve is selling?

3) How does Linda describe the current system?

Dialog: GOOD example

Linda: Hello. Drucker and Smythe.

Steve: Hi. Is this Ms. Linda Darling?

Linda: Yes?

Steve: Hi Ms. Darling. How are you doing?

Linda: Just fine.

Steve: This is Steve Steele from Nexus Communications.

Linda: Uhuh.

Steve: Do you have a quick minute?

Linda: Well, actually, I'm pretty busy? Is it gonna be fast?

Steve: Yes, absolutely. I understand you are a busy. I want to respect your time, so I'll be brief.

Linda: Okay.

Steve: Do your employees use audio or video conferencing?

Linda: Yeah. All the time.

Steve: Great. I think we can help you. We specialize in working with firms like Drucker and Smythe so that you can save money and dramatically increase the effectiveness and efficiency of conferencing.

Linda: Uh huh.

Steve: In fact, we also serve Hatchet, Pritchins and Rutherford.

Linda: Really? Okay.

Steve: If you could create the ideal conferencing solution, what about your service would you like to improve or change?

Linda: That's a good question. I guess it's a little bit unwieldy. I wish we could simplify everything...



It sounds like Steve is well on his way to a sale. Let's look closely at how he handles the call.

Of course, persuading different people requires different styles and different approaches. You have to take cultural and individual differences into consideration. But no matter who you are talking with, you need to ask the right questions and actually *listen* to the replies.

For active listening, the strategies we practiced in BEP 45, "Keeping the conversation going by showing interest," are very useful. So that would be a good episode to review.

Now let's go through what Steve does in the dialogue step by step.

First, after giving Linda a warm greeting, he is careful to show that he respects her time. What does he say?

Steve: Do you have a quick minute?

Linda: Well, actually, I'm pretty busy? Is it gonna be fast?

Steve: Yes, absolutely. I understand you are a busy. I want to respect your time, so I'll be brief.

Expressions such as "Do you have a quick minute," "I'm sure you are busy," and "I want to respect your time" are all polite ways to start the conversation.

What are some other ways to show that you value the prospect's time?

- Do you have a sec to talk?
- I'll only take a minute of your time.
- No worries. This will be really quick.
- This will just take a quick sec.
- I understand. The only reason I'm calling is to schedule an appointment.
- I totally understand you are very busy Ms. Smith, so I'll make this quick.
- I'll be really quick.

In these examples, notice how "second" is sometimes abbreviated to "sec" in oral English.

Why don't you give it a try? Imagine you are cold calling Linda. First ask her if she has a quick minute or a second to talk. Then, when she says she is pretty busy, acknowledge her concern by using some of the language we have just studied for valuing the prospect's time. Are you ready? Start talking after you hear the beep.

Practice 1:

Learner: _____

Linda: Well, to tell you the truth, I'm actually pretty busy.

Learner: _____

Linda: All right. Go ahead.

How did you do? Now let's listen to an **answer**, but remember this is just an example. There are many possible ways to deal with this situation.

Learner: Do you have a quick second to talk?

Linda: Well, to tell you the truth, I'm actually pretty busy.

Learner: No worries, Ms. Darling. I totally understand you are busy, so I'll make this quick.

Linda: All right. Go ahead.

Great. So after getting the conversation started on a positive note with a warm greeting and a signal that he values Linda's time, Steve is careful to check that the service he is selling would be useful to Linda.

Steve: Do your employees use audio or video conferencing?

Linda: Yeah. All the time.

Actually, in this case Steve probably knew already that the answer to this question would be "yes," so he is just using it to establish relevance. But this is an important type of question to ask; there is no point in talking to someone who doesn't need what you are selling.

Next, Steve states the reason he is calling by explaining the benefit of the service to Linda.

Steve: Great. I think we can help you. We specialize in working with firms like Drucker and Smythe so that you can save money while dramatically increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of conferencing.

The main idea here is to get the prospect's attention. This may also be a chance to state your value proposition—what differentiates your product from your competitors'.

To explain the benefit, you can say "allows you to," "enables you to," "gives you," or "helps you." Let's listen to some examples.

- The Gold Plus Account allows you to book conferences over the phone.
- It is very convenient and saves you a lot of time.
- Our process will enable you to overcome the challenges you are facing.
- This service gives you greater flexibility in managing your database.
- As a Nexus customer, you can enjoy several benefits. These include a dedicated help line and 24-hour service.
- Using this product enables you to increase productivity and helps you to save time and money.

Notice the use of such expressions as "increase productivity," "save time and money," "give you greater flexibility," and "enjoy several benefits." As always, strong use of correct collocations makes your English sound professional and fluent.

Now you practice talking about the benefit of your product. Think about a product or service that your company produces. Imagine that you are cold calling Linda.

After the beep, explain the benefit of your product to her. Use such language as “helps you to,” “gives you,” “allows you to,” “enables you to,” and such collocations as “enjoy several benefits,” “increase productivity,” “overcome challenges,” “save time and money,” and “give you greater flexibility.” Are you ready? Give yourself a few seconds to think, then begin talking after the beep.

Practice 2:

Learner: _____

Linda: Wow, sounds interesting. Tell me more.

Great. Now listen to an example **answer**.

Learner: This product will enable you to enjoy several benefits. It can help you to increase productivity and save time and money. It can also give you increased flexibility in how you plan your business, which will help you overcome the challenges you are facing.

Linda: Wow, sounds interesting. Tell me more.

Obviously, everyone’s product will be different. This is just an example of how the language can be put together.

Okay. So far Steve has opened the call positively, established relevance and gotten Linda’s attention by explaining the benefit of his service. The next step is the most important one.

Remember, if there is no problem or clear opportunity to improve their current situation, there is no reason for the prospect to meet with you or take the next step in your sales process. So you need to establish a clear need for the service you are selling, perhaps even push your prospects off balance a little bit by letting them know that their current product is not adequate. By establishing a clear need, you are guaranteeing your success.

How do you do this? The best way is to start by asking questions. One of the most important things I’ve learned in sales is that most people will tell you anything you want to know. People love talking about themselves. So let them do the selling. All you have to do is ask the right questions. This is “needs analysis.”

What kind of question does Steve ask?

Steve: If you could create the ideal conferencing solution, what about your service would you like to improve or change?

Linda: That’s a good question. I guess it’s a little bit unwieldy. I wish we could simplify everything...

Rather than working from a script—which sounds mechanical and insincere—you should put a lot of thought into different kinds of questions you can ask depending on the situation. Generally, the best kind are “open questions,” questions that begin with what, why, where, when, and how. Avoid yes/no questions because they don’t encourage your prospect to talk, and if she says no, you have nowhere to go.

“What about your service would you like to improve or change?” is a great type of question, because it gets right to the heart of the need. Linda replies that their current service is “unwieldy,” which means it’s difficult to use or handle.

What are some types of questions you can ask? Well, it depends on your service, the type of people you are selling to, and your own personal style. But let’s listen to some examples to study language and give you some ideas.

- Can you tell me more about the kind of financial services you normally use?
- Can you tell me what kind of services you are looking for?
- What kind of services would you be looking for?
- Would you be interested in doing all your banking over the phone?
- What do you like most about your current supplier?
- What are the most important issues for you?
- What have your experiences been with ABC Organization?
- Where do you see your greatest challenge?
- How do these challenges affect your business?
- What kind of affect do these issues have on your bottom line?
- If you could change one aspect about your current arrangement, what would it be?
- If you could create the ideal solution, what about your current service would you like to improve or change?
- If you could eliminate three of your biggest problems, headaches or stresses what would they be?

In our example, Steve was pretty lucky to find a good prospect. You will often have to ask more than one question to establish what the customer’s need is and how it relates to the product you are selling. But once you have, it is important that you demonstrate this to the customer by summarizing and confirming what they have said. This is a kind of empathy, and it is very important to the sales process. We’ll be covering this skill in the second episode on cold calling, so be sure to tune back in next time.

Great! Well, that’s just about it for today’s show. You’ve looked and good and bad examples of opening the call. And you’ve practiced some great techniques for getting off to a good start, including respecting the prospects time, clarifying the benefit, establishing relevance and analyzing the need.

Be sure to check out the study notes where you’ll find more practice exercises, vocabulary explanations and learning strategies.

In the meantime, keep practicing and take care! See you again soon at businessenglishpod.com.

Language Review Questions

Fill in the blanks, then match the language in the box with the cold calling steps below. The first one has been done for you.

a.	No worries. This will be really <u>quick</u> .	e.	Are your computers ever _____ with viruses?
b.	Does your staff need to speak English at _____?	f.	Where do you see your _____ challenge?
c.	The Gold Plus Account _____ you to book conferences over the phone.	g.	This will just take a quick _____.
d.	If you could magically _____ three of your biggest problems, headaches or stresses what would they be?	h.	Using this product _____ you to increase productivity and helps you to save time and money.

1 Respect the prospect's time	a.
2 Establish relevance	
3 Clarify benefits	
4 Analyze needs	

Learning Tip

Think of a product or service that your company provides. Then think about questions you can ask to establish relevance. For example, if you work for a travel agency, you might ask, "Do your staff travel?" Then, list the benefits of your service. Write a concise statement of your value proposition—what differentiates you from your competitors—using such positive language as "enables you to," "allows you to," "helps you to," "you can," etc. Finally, decide on a few good questions to help you analyze and establish needs. Listen to this podcast again or to the phrasecast for ideas. Finally, practice by writing out a dialogue, or by role playing with a colleague. You should record yourself, if possible, and listen to what you said again. How does your voice sound? Is it tense, or is it natural or relaxed.

This is great practice even if you are not in sales. Persuading people is an important part of business, no matter what you do. Alternatively, you can practice "selling" your ideas to your colleagues or to you boss: The same process you use for cold calling you can also use for convincing someone of something in a meeting. This might be a great chance to practice asking your boss for that raise you've been wanting!

Useful Language

Valuing the prospect's time:

- Do you have a sec to talk?
- I'll only take a minute of your time.
- No worries. This will be really quick.
- This will just take a quick sec.
- I understand. The only reason I'm calling is to schedule an appointment.
- I totally understand you are very busy Ms. Smith, so I'll make this quick.
- I'll be really quick.

Benefit to customer:

- The Gold Plus Account allows you to book conferences over the phone.
- It is very convenient and saves you a lot of time.
- Our process will enable you to overcome the challenges you are facing.
- This service gives you greater flexibility in managing your database.
- As a Nexus customer, you can enjoy several benefits. These include a dedicated help line and 24-hour service.
- Using this product enables you to increase productivity and helps you to save time and money.

Establishing the customers needs:

- Can you tell me more about the kind of financial services you normally use?
- Can you tell me what kind of services you are looking for?
- What kind of services would you be looking for?
- Would you be interested in doing all your banking over the phone?
- What do you like most about your current supplier?
- What are the most important issues for you?
- What have your experiences been with ABC Organization?
- Where do you see your greatest challenge?
- How do these challenges affect your business?
- What kind of affect do these issues have on your bottom line?
- If you could change one aspect about your current arrangement, what would it be?
- If you could create the ideal solution, what about your current service would you like to improve or change?
- If you could eliminate three of your biggest problems, headaches or stresses what would they be?

Answers

Listening Comprehension

- 1) Yes. In reply to this question, Linda says, "A lot." This is a strong sign to Steve that he has reached a good prospect, or potential customer.
- 2) Steve says that using his service means "you can save money while dramatically increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of conferencing."
- 3) Linda says that it's "unwieldy," which means it's difficult to use or handle.

Language Review

- b. work
- c. allows
- d. eliminate
- e. infected
- f. greatest/biggest/most significant
- g. sec
- h. enables

1. a, g
2. b, e
3. c, h
4. d, f