



Last week I got an advance copy of Mark Hunter's book "High-Profit Prospecting" and I loved it. It is a super valuable book and I recommending you to buy a copy and read it.

Mark is a good friend, so I asked him to share with us some insights and strategies about prospecting, so we all can learn.



Mark - First, thank you for taking the time for this interview. I would be happy if you could tell us about yourself, your professional background and the work you do with organizations and companies around the world.



All of my work is in helping salespeople and companies find and retain better customers. This is designed to do one thing, allow more sales to be made at a higher price. To do this I speak extensively around the world, already this this year I'll spoken on 4 continents. Due to the number of companies that want to work with me I do most of my work by way of speaking either on-site or via the internet. In total I speak more than 200 times per year and all of it is on this key topic of helping people find and retain better customers. One secret I share, to do this requires salespeople to be seen as a leader so naturally much of what I talk about is to show people how they can become a sales leader.



Let's talk about the BIG topic of the year - Prospecting - The Lifeblood of the Sales Process. What is all about and Is it matter?



Salespeople too many times discount a sale to close a deal because what they have been dealing with is a prospect they never should have wasted their time on. If we start by reaching out for the right prospect and qualifying them faster we'll be able to close more sales faster and at a higher price



There're several books about prospecting. What makes this one different?



This one is different because I view from the role you first must be seen as a sales leader with whoever it is you're talking to. Second, rather than jumping in and giving all kinds of tips to prospect I first ask the reader to evaluate their selling process and what their perfect customer looks like. If we don't know what we're looking for we'll wind up chasing any and every prospect.



Can anyone learn to prospect effectively?



Yes, as long as you have a personality and care about people you can prospect. In the end prospecting is about connecting with another person and to do it takes two personalities to understand each other.



Can you walk us through the prospecting strategies?



Wow, this question alone would require 100 pages as there is so much to say. Let me condense it down to 3 main points.

1. Don't start what you can't finish. Too many reach out to a bunch of people by calling or emailing and then think that's all there is. Prospecting is about repetition, it's about being willing to make multiple contacts to the same person over a specific time frame ... just remember each message must be different!
2. Prospecting only works when you make it a priority in your day and week. The big problem too many people have is they place prospecting too far down on their list of things to do. Unless you make it priority it will never happen.
3. Never rely on one sales tool. Prospecting requires being able to use the telephone, email, social media and every other tool available. Relying on one tool can be a recipe for failure, just because you're comfortable with email doesn't mean your prospects are. You must use everything.



People afraid to prospecting, they don't want to hear the word NO. What can you tell them?



There is nothing wrong with hearing "no" I'll take a fast no any day over a person who drags out their decision forever before saying no. Regardless of how many times you'll hear "no" the sun is still going to come up in the morning. I've faced plenty of rejection making sales calls but just about the time you think you're going to hear another no somebody says yes.



What is the best method to prospecting?



First off is use your personality, allow it to come through, this will enable you to be far more relaxed and increase your ability to listen and understand the other person.

My number one rule about prospecting is to merely learn one piece of information about the prospect that allows me to meet with them again. Don't put so much pressure on yourself to expect each call to result in a huge sale.

The method of prospecting I prefer the most is still the telephone because it allows for my personality to come through and that extends to even the voicemails I will leave. Key is to leave short voicemails, I like 11 – 14 seconds, that will take some practice but it's doable.



Over the past few years, more and more “gurus” recommend using social media to connect. They tell that prospecting and cold calls are dead. Is that true?



The only thing about cold calling that's dead is the “cold” and that's because there is so much information available about everybody and every company to allow you to at least know something before each call.

Social media is a great tool but don't think of it as just throwing stuff out and expecting calls to come in. That is simply not going to happen. Use social media as nothing more than a different type of telephone.

I use social media to allow me to have one-to-one conversations with prospects.



For the vast majority of salespeople, prospecting doesn't work the way they expect it should. The strategies they are using fail to deliver the results they want. What they are missing?



Two things they're missing, one is using the right strategy and two being disciplined to follow through. First let me explain the wrong strategy. Most prospecting plans are built on what feels comfortable to the salesperson with little regard to understanding how the prospect is receiving it.

This is why in my book I devote an entire chapter to digging in and figuring what should the prospecting plan look like.

Second, lack of follow through. Prospecting is no different than any other part of the selling process and being disciplined to follow through is where far too many salespeople fall apart.

This is why I stress you don't start what you can't finish. Following through in a timely orderly manner will many times wind up allowing even an average process to create great results.



How can salespeople can overcome the fear of prospecting?



When you're hungry enough, you'll begin prospecting!

The easiest way I've found to start any day prospecting is to make your first call on an existing customer.

They will be happy to hear from you and will reinforce in your mind why what you sell is so good. What this first call does is then motivate you to want to help others achieve the same outcome.

Remember you're not selling what you're doing is helping others achieve an outcome they didn't think was possible.



How can sales leaders can find a better sales prospects?



Easy. Make more connections and become more visible in your marketplace. A person can have a great restaurant but if nobody knows about it the restaurant won't make it.

When you're a leader people are attracted to you and it becomes easier to connect with others. This is why I say you need to view yourself and be seen by others as a sales leader.



What is the best time to prospecting?



Every day!

The best time is naturally going to vary by industry, what you're selling, etc. Overall I've found the best time to prospect is in the morning because if you don't do it in the morning you'll become so busy you won't make time to do it in the afternoon.

Also, don't allow yourself to think a certain day of the week or time of day is not good. Many times what a salesperson thinks and what is reality are two different things. I've found for some industries prospecting during holiday weeks can be great because many times prospects are more relaxed and therefore more willing to talk.



Please share with us the top 5 tips to prospecting



5 Tips:

1. Schedule minimally three 2-hour blocks of time each week to prospect. Build it into your schedule from the start.
2. Leave short voicemails, 11 to 14 seconds.
3. Write your prospecting emails to be read on a smart phone, this means keeping it short and making sure it grabs the attention of the other person quickly.
4. Qualify your prospect quickly to avoid you from spending time with prospects who are nothing more than suspects. Your goal is to spend more time with fewer prospects.
5. Never end the day without knowing exactly who you're going to contact the next day. Too much time is spent getting ready to prospect that it keeps people from actually prospecting. Make preparing for the next day the last thing you each day.



Mark, I want to thank you for the time to respond to these questions and your desire to share insights and ideas about prospecting.

THANKS Mark