

WHAT IS COLD CALLING?

Cold calling is the practice of contacting potential employers directly by phone, without any prior contact, and marketing yourself to them. This is best accomplished by identifying and understanding your skills, and how they are relevant to the employers you approach and the jobs they may have available.

WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF COLD CALLING?

Statistics indicate that approximately four out of five jobs available at any given time are *not* advertised – combined, these opportunities are known as ‘*the hidden job market*’. To find these jobs, different approaches to job searching are required, one of which is cold calling. It is a good strategy to use when:

- there is an available list of companies or contacts in an area of interest (specific job, industry, or geographic location)
- when time is limited (for example, starting a summer job search late in the Spring).

Cold calling can be successfully combined with Networking, if you have a list of personal contacts that are in a position to hire, or can refer you to someone else who may be hiring. See the *UTM Career Centre Effective Networking Tip Sheet*:

http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/pdf/Eff_Networking_tipsheet.pdf.

EFFECTIVE COLD CALLING STRATEGIES

1. Getting Started

Cold calling may seem intimidating, but the secret to success is being prepared and preparation begins with organization. Be sure to:

- Update your *resume* identifying the skills and qualities you would like to highlight to employers and the relevant experiences that support them
- Develop a *system* (notebook or agenda – print or electronic) to record *when* and *who* you speak with, *what* was said, and *when* you will be following up (if you make a successful contact)
- Start an organized *list of the companies* you want to contact, including company information gathered from research, and questions you plan to ask.

2. Finding Contacts

Locating good contacts is critical when looking for a job. Keep your eyes open and be creative. Places to look for contacts include:

- Directories that identify and organize prospective employers according to industry, geographic area, and/or program of study. Many directories provide company summaries in addition to contacts and position titles within the organization. Numerous directories are available in the UTM Career Centre library and on the UTM Career Centre website
- De-listed UofT Career Centre postings (accessible via a Career Centre account) which can be used to search job opportunities that companies posted in the past, giving an idea of requirements, hiring times, and contact information (need to be checked for accuracy). Contacting a potential employer before their usual hiring time may result in them not needing to post an opportunity!
- Professors, family and friends, all of whom can provide access to their personal networks—you might be surprised who they know!

Once you have compiled an initial list of companies, determine *who specifically within the company you should speak with*. You want to speak to the person most likely to be *responsible for hiring in your area of interest*. To do this:

- Research the company, either online through their website, using directories/other publications, or with information interviews (see *UTM Career Centre Information Interviewing tip sheet*). This research will also help generate good questions to ask when you call.
- Pre-call the company's reception number if you have difficulty finding the names of individuals in charge of specific departments (*Remember, you are only asking reception for the name of the individual, not to say that you are looking for a job or want to know if they're hiring. If you are asked the reason for your enquiry, say that you are doing some research on the company or wanting to address a letter to the hiring manager. Be sure to confirm the correct spelling and pronunciation of the contact name plus their job title).

3. Prepare your Marketing Script or Pitch

Before making any calls, you want to prepare a *script (or pitch)* to give your conversation some structure and ensure that important details are not forgotten (contact name, title, company information, questions). The script should *not be thought of as something you will 'read'* but rather as something to help you make the best use of your time on the phone.

When creating your script, keep in mind that:

- it should suit you – for example, not too formal if you aren't
- it should be tailored to the company you are contacting, so prepare a separate version for each call
- it should be **no longer than 30 seconds**.

Your marketing pitch should include:

- a personal introduction using your full name and addressing the employer by “Mr.” or “Ms.”
- an introductory question asking whether it’s a good time to call or if you could schedule a better time if they sound busy or respond negatively
- brief details about your relevant background/experience, an explanation that you are looking for a new position or are hoping to work in a new environment, and that you would appreciate any advice or information regarding positions and hiring within their company.
Note: be prepared to expand on these details if the employer asks for more information about you and have your resume in front of you for reference.
- specific questions, possibly including:
 - I’m particularly interested in (*this aspect*) of your company, can you tell me a bit more about it and what opportunities might exist in the near future?
 - Can you offer any advice based on your experience in the industry? (*This is a Networking-related question which you can incorporate if an opportunity presents itself*)
 - Could you recommend any contacts that I might be able to speak to regarding work in this area?

4. Making & Managing the Call

Before making the call, have your script and resume ready, but be prepared for changes to your script if necessary. Keep in mind that you want to listen carefully and focus on the conversation you’re about to have.

When you make the call, you’ll likely be connected in one of the following ways:

- directly to the employer -proceed with your Marketing pitch, after confirming if it’s a good time, and remember to take notes while you talk. At the end of the conversation, be sure to thank the employer for their time and ask if you can follow up at a later time. After the call, be sure you’ve noted all important information and determine if a follow up is appropriate
- to a reception desk – ask to be connected with the contact, and, if told they’re not available, ask when a better time to call back would be. If asked the reason for your call, let them know that you are researching the industry and seeking the expertise of this person
- to a voicemail – leave a short message with your name, the date/time, and a short message based on your script; leave either a number at which you can be reached, or mention a time when you will call back (record that and be sure to follow up). If you leave a contact number, be prepared to take their return call at any time at that number (have your notes and resume with you).

5. Keeping Track of your Contacts

- keep whatever system you’ve decided to use with you and up-to-date (*when and who* you spoke with, *what* was said, and *when/if* you will be following up, any *updated contact information*)
- carefully keep track of who referred you *to new contacts* (plus any information that was provided to you about that person) so that you can mention the referring connection when you speak to the new contact

WHAT TO DO IF YOU’RE NERVOUS

- Practice, practice, practice. The more you do it, the easier it will get
- Book an appointment with a UTM Career Centre Employment Advisor to discuss strategies and practice cold calling
- Remember, the worst that can happen is that an employer says they’re not hiring, and can’t help you. Then, go to the next contact on your list.

UTM CAREER CENTRE RESOURCES

- Review articles in the *Cold Calling* binder
- *Effective Networking Workshops* are held regularly at the UTM Career Centre. Check our calendar of events: <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/careers/calendar.html>
- Book an appointment with an *Employment Advisors* or *Career Counsellors* to plan your networking approach and practice your 30-second introduction
- Tip Sheets: *Effective Networking*, *Career Fairs*, *Company Research*, *Information Interviewing*, and more
- *The Career Directory*, by Richard Yerema and Karen Chow (2006)
- *The Art of Phone Interviewing*, by Mikoel Turner (2002).