



# TOP 10 REASONS MOST PROSPECTING PLANS FAIL

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## Do you want to be more ***successful prospecting?***

Of course you do! Unfortunately, too many salespeople either don't have a plan – or the plan they do have is not helping them at all!

In this eBook, I dig into the reasons most prospecting plans fail. By looking at what to avoid, we will uncover the specific ways to succeed.

## ***How to best use this eBook...***

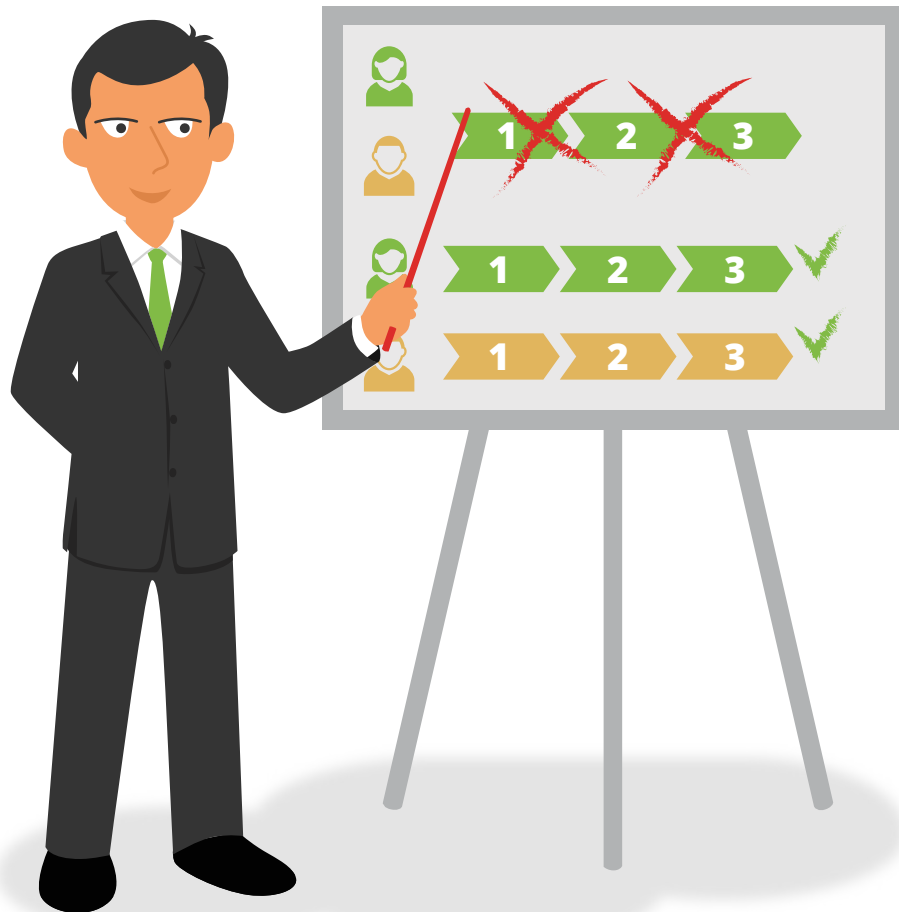
To radically improve your prospecting success, don't just skim over this eBook. Instead, read it closely, writing down your own observations along the way.

Based on what you read, start making incremental changes in your prospecting efforts. Over time, with consistency and confidence, your steps will lead to the radical success you truly want.

# REASON #1:

## Using the same prospecting process for all your prospects

This is a huge mistake, but we do it because we're lazy!  
Problem is being lazy only results in one thing – poor results.



Using the same prospecting process for every prospect is no different than thinking you can fix any problem in your home with a single tool. Sorry, it's just not possible! Quit thinking about your prospects in the same way. It's essential to segment them by type and have a different prospecting plan for each type.

The example I'll use is senior level managers. These might be your target, but you're not going to reach them using the same process you would a low-level person.

Segment your prospects by message type, and by this I mean by the type of message and strategy that will most likely engage them.

A low-level person is far more likely to take a phone call than a senior level person who isn't going to talk with anyone they don't trust. What does this mean? It means the message and strategy are also going to have different timelines associated with them. Your prospecting timelines and the frequency of the messages are going to vary by whom you're trying to reach.

Another example I use is if you're selling into the educational market, trying to reach a professor at the start of the academic year is simply not going to work. Conversely, if you're trying to reach a graduate student, the start of the academic year might be perfect.

Frequency also is going to vary. A simple rule I like to follow is the higher up in an organization the person is or the more knowledgeable they are, the less frequent my contacts will be. The lower a person is, the more frequently I can contact them.

The higher up in an organization a person is, the more I will be running into gatekeepers and the more likely I may have to use other contacts they're already comfortable with to reach them. Lower in an organization, the more it can be a game of simply being there to get noticed.

Your objective is to tailor your prospecting process based on the type of prospect you're dealing with, knowing the frequency, timing, message and delivery process will be different.

## REASON #2:

Having too many prospects in your pipeline



This tip rubs a lot of people the wrong way, especially managers, but I'm a firm believer in it. I will have more success if I have fewer prospects on whom I can really focus rather than a bunch of names I can't effectively handle.

To get to this point it means you must have a prospecting process that allows you to qualify quickly whether or not the prospect is really a prospect or if they're nothing but a suspect.

Salespeople spend way too much time chasing suspects. Many times the suspects are nice people – they will engage you, the salesperson, so you think they must be a potential customer. You should never forget the first objective of prospecting is to qualify the prospect.

The most valuable asset you have is your time. It's not what you sell or the service you provide; it's your time. **If you waste 25% of your prospecting time with suspects, then you've lost 25% of your prospecting time you could be spending making money.**



### 4 Rules to know if they're really a prospect and not a suspect

#1

Have they told you when they are going to make a decision? Nothing worse than spending time with someone who is not going to buy for a couple of years.

#2

Are you sure you're dealing with the decision maker? Nothing will waste more time than having to sell it twice, because the first time it wasn't the decision maker.

#3

Have they given you some proprietary information? People aren't going to share with you proprietary information unless they have confidence in you and are interested in doing business with you.

#4

Do you know their process for making a decision? This question encompasses the previous 3 questions, but it challenges you to understand what other issues you could be dealing with.



Your objective is to spend more time with fewer prospects who will in turn give you the highest potential to close a sale.

## REASON #3:

### Not following up

Not having the time to follow up and follow through is a direct result of the up and down cycle too many salespeople and even companies go through.

Business is slow and the outlook is grim, so it's all hands on deck in a full out blitz to make calls and prospect like crazy. In the race to fill the pipeline, the game is to contact as many people as possible.

Problem with contacting as many people as possible is there is no way to repeat the process on going.

I'm a firm believer in what the directions say on every bottle of shampoo: "Repeat!"

You have to repeat and repeat and repeat again as often as necessary. What happens is the initial blitz of calls might be fine, but then stuff starts popping up, leads begin developing and time becomes precious and the thing that falls off first is the repeat calls.

### DON'T START WHAT YOU CAN'T FINISH!

If your prospecting process takes 6 – 8 touches to generate interest, then don't go making so many initial contacts that your calendar won't allow room for you to handle the follow-up touches.

As I said up front – this one rubs a lot of managers the wrong way, but what it will prevent is a lot of stupid energy being wasted.

There is nothing worse than making 100 touches and not being able to follow up with them again for a year. Do you think there is any chance there will be value in doing that? No! Zero value unless the goal is to merely look busy.

Your objective as you build out your prospecting plan is to block out time on your calendar for not just the next day, but also the next week, the next month, and even the next quarter.

Being successful in prospecting requires consistency and follow-through, and there is no way you can do that unless you plan for it.



## REASON #4:

### Not segmenting your prospects based on who they are and their needs

This ties back into the first item on the list. You must be able to segment, and don't think for a moment it's around what you sell.

Segmenting is about the prospect and the outcomes they expect to achieve. For example, one type of prospect might look to what you have to offer as a way of preventing pain or risk in their business. Another person may look at the same item you sell as a way to gain a competitive advantage.

What this means is your approach and messaging must be different. What works for one prospect may not work for another one.

Very frequently you are not going to know the specific needs of the prospect until you are able to meet with them. What this means is you have to vary your prospecting process, maybe even after the first contact.

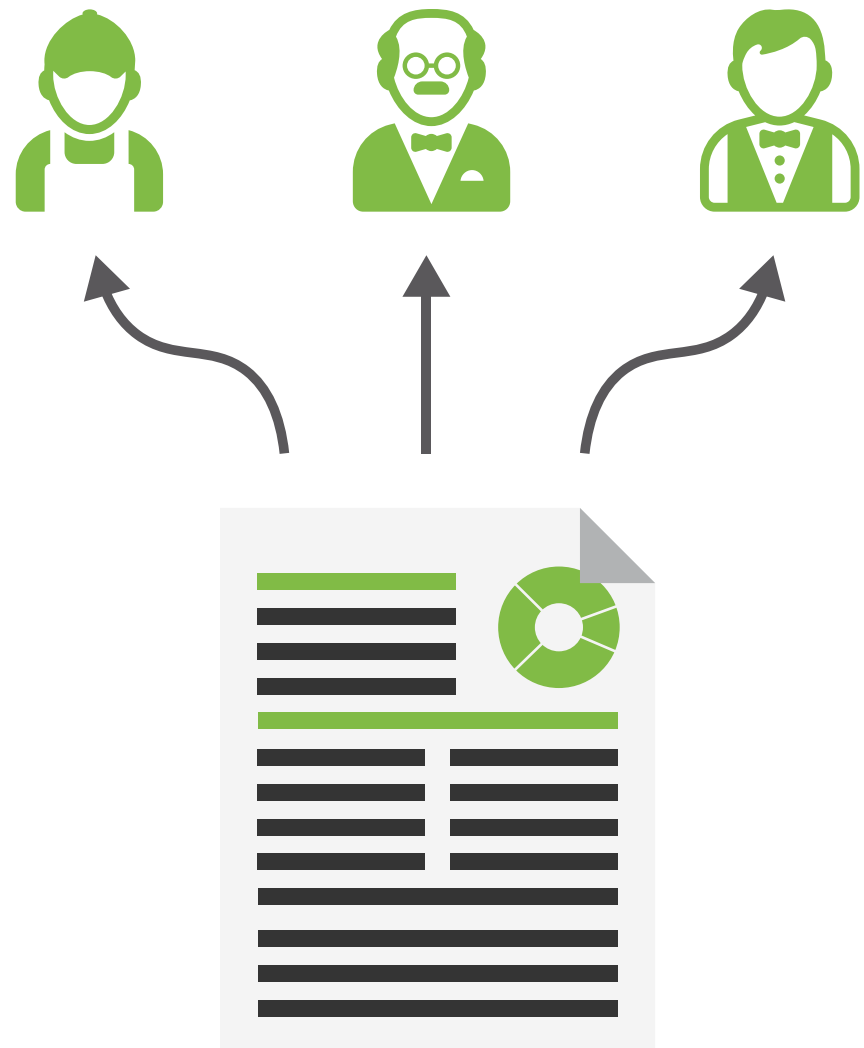
Example is you might be selling software and your target buyer is finance departments. The person who is buying it to prevent risk is most likely driven by a different timetable than the person who is buying it as a competitive advantage.

The sooner you can identify these needs, the sooner you can tailor your approach.

The challenge is many times prospects may look alike to you on the surface, and it's only after you've had a first contact that you then know which way to lead.

This is why it's so important to build your prospecting process around gaining information. Best way to do this is by asking questions or posing scenarios designed to allow the prospect to see and share their true need.

Your objective is to review why customers have bought from you in the past and use this knowledge to build out options you can use with prospects going forward.





## REASON #5:

### Relying on email as your primary prospecting tool

Email is the lazy person's prospecting crutch. Far too many salespeople use the excuse that email is the only way to reach prospects.



I'll tell you why salespeople say this. It's because they don't want to have to work, and they're scared of actually having to pick up the telephone!

It's not that email isn't a great prospecting tool. I use it all the time! But it's just one of your prospecting tools. What becomes a challenge is that because it's so easy to use, it becomes way too easy to use it too much.

One of the biggest problems salespeople make with using email for prospecting is they think just because they read the email, then their prospect will too. It's time to throw that myth out the window!

First, your prospect may not even see your email, because their spam filter may have blocked it. This often is the direct result of a salesperson who thinks they will reach the person by sending them a blitz of emails over a short period of time. Sorry, this was a bombing strategy used in World War II. It's not a strategy you should use today.

Sending more than 3 or 4 emails in a 45-day period is asking the spam/junk filters to exile you forever.

Second, just because you wrote your email on your computer doesn't mean the prospect is going to see it on their computer. Chances are they'll view it on their smart phone. And even if they do that, it will be based on what the title says as to whether they will read it or delete it.

Today there are as many barriers to sending emails as there are barriers to trying to reach someone on a telephone; it's just that we don't see the email barriers.

Email works as a prospecting tool when the message is tight, short and beneficial to the person receiving it.

Your objective is to assess the role email plays in your prospecting process. Make email one of the tools you use, but not the only tool.

## REASON #6:

### Thinking social media is your answer

This one absolutely drives me nuts. For some reason, there is a belief in the sales world that if you spend enough time on social media, you'll have all the business you want.

I have one response to that. Go ahead and spend all of your time on social media and come back to me in six months and let me know how your sales area doing? I'll tell you how they'll be doing - you'll be starving!

Social media plays a role in the sales process, but it's no different than the role traditional marketing/advertising plays. It helps, but it's a long-term play that can take months and years to begin bearing serious fruit.

Example I like to use when talking about social media is Coca-Cola and how they advertise. How many ads have you seen for Coca-Cola in your lifetime? Thousands. If advertising was so awesome, all Coca-Cola would have to do is show you one ad and you would be hooked for life.

But Coca-Cola knows advertising has some limits, and that's the reason you keep seeing messages. Same thing with social media. The space is so busy that it takes an incredible amount of time to garner a payout.

Rule I tell sales managers is first, let your Marketing Department own the social media strategy, and second, only allow your people to deal in social media during off hours. Only exception is when they're targeting a specific person/business and a social media platform is the only way to reach them.

My biggest concern with social media is it can act like a giant funnel that pulls you in. The one 2-minute contact you wanted to make turns into a 2-hour foray into everything else but the specific contact.

Don't rely on social media as your answer to prospecting. You will be disappointed.

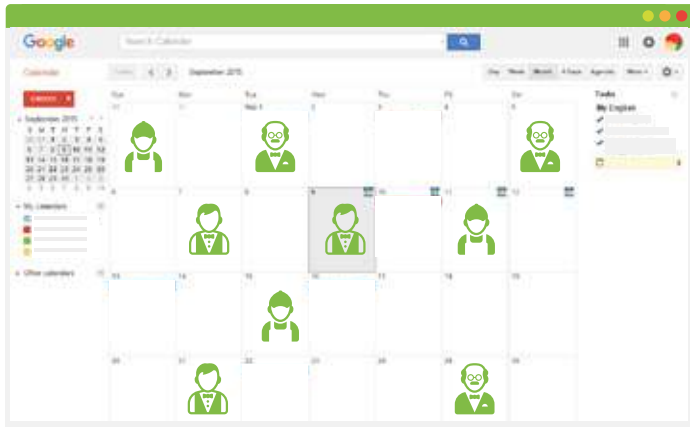




## REASON #7:

Not allocating the proper commitment of your time. Prospecting happens when you engage!

Prospecting is not something you do when you don't have anything else to do. It's not something you do when you suddenly find yourself without enough customers. Prospecting must be something you do on a regular basis.



View prospecting the same way you do taking a shower. You take a shower daily. You should be prospecting daily. Failing to prospect on a regular basis is putting yourself in a situation where your sales will constantly be in a peak/valley syndrome.

Regardless of how successful you might be or how you don't feel there is a need to prospect because your customers like you so much, the truth is that you **MUST** consistently prospect!

You must allocate time on your calendar, and this doesn't mean just adding it to your list of things you want to get done. No, you must physically block the time on your calendar.

Minimally, you block time each week; ideally, you block time every day.

Dedicated time built into your day is going to increase your probability of doing it. For too many salespeople, prospecting is the last thing they want to do, because of how difficult it can be. This is why merely having it on your list of things to do is simply not good enough.

Next step in allocating time to prospect is actually doing it. Thinking about prospecting and preparing to prospect is **NOT** prospecting.

Too many salespeople will have an hour of time blocked on their calendar, only to spend the entire hour getting ready to do it but never actually doing it. When you allocate time to prospect, include time to prepare to prospect.

This means for most salespeople, you will need to set aside nearly twice as much time as you think. Doing so is going to help you increase significantly the number of contacts you make.

Your objective is simple: Arrange your calendar in a way you can block time each day or minimally each week to not just think about prospecting, but to actually do it.

## REASON #8:

### Failing to realize your prospects don't care about you and your company

Unless you're somebody famous or unless you have a product everyone has to have, I hate to break the news to you, but your prospect couldn't care less.

What does this mean to you?

It means you need to quit sending out stupid emails or leaving pathetic voicemails that extoll who you are and how great your company is. Your prospects simply don't care!

Your prospect didn't wake up this morning drooling over the possibility you might call them today.

They have their own problems. To the prospect, you're no different and certainly no better than any other salesperson who is thinking the same way.

If you are still stuck in the stone age (pre-2005) and still sending out "capabilities" presentations, believing that is the best way to separate yourself from others, may I introduce you to the World Wide Web.

Everything the customer would ever want to know about you, your company and what you sell is already available on the web.

Regardless of what you sell, you have more competitors than ever before and each one is ready to jump in and grab the business you're trying to get.

Park the self-serving garbage and even the blather about how many years you've been in business and the awards you've won! The prospect does not care!

Biggest issue with this is how far too many salespeople start off their prospecting email by wasting the first sentence introducing themselves and their company.

Cut to the chase and do it quick! Remember, your prospect likely is viewing your email on a smart phone, and they're making the decision to read or delete based on what the first 100-150 characters of the email say. Save all of your "look at me" information for your high school reunion.



## REASON #9:

Not making your messages about the prospect's needs



Nobody cares about what you are offering. What they do care about is how they are going to take care of their problems. Show them you're going to take care of their problems or help them move ahead, and then they will be interested in what you have to sell.

Too many prospecting messages are nothing more than short statements of product features. You should be focused on delivering short statements that garner interest in what the customer is facing.

A salesperson recently sent me a sample prospecting email he was using and it included a list of bullet points of the features his products offered. He wanted me to heap praise on him for being concise.

Sure, it was concise. And I was concise when I told him to throw the email away. Every prospecting message you deliver must be focused around helping the prospect by sharing with them insights they will find of value or asking questions that get them thinking.



If you focus your message around what you have, you may still be successful. I guarantee, though, you'll wind up with nothing more than economic customers who have already done their homework and are ready to buy.

This is a key reason why I believe the number one thing a salesperson must do is bring value to the customer in ways the customer can't find via the internet. If what you're doing is merely sharing the same information they could get off the internet, then you will be replaced by an automated system.

Focus on what the prospect needs, either by asking of questions or sharing key insights. Let them guide you from there.



Your objective is to develop a list of 10 questions and 10 critical insights you can use in your prospecting messages that will allow the prospect to see you care about what they care about, not about what you're selling.

## REASON #10:

### Failing to realize the telephone is still a great prospecting tool!

Sadly, too many salespeople fail to realize that the telephone is still a great prospecting tool. It doesn't matter how much anyone says otherwise, I'm still a firm believer the telephone is an amazing prospecting tool.

I run into too many salespeople who, when asked how much time they spend on the phone, respond, "Little to none."

The telephone works when used right. Yes, I know people don't answer the phone. Hey, I'm guilty of not answering it too. Why don't people answer the phone? It's because they don't want to get stuck on the phone with a stupid salesperson!

Yes, I just said it!

People will, however, use voicemail messages as their screening tool. Leave a good voicemail and you earn points; leave a bad message and you'll be banished to the pool of permanent rejection.

Salespeople are quick to say phone numbers are hard to get. Yes, they can be hard to get, but that means they're also hard for your competition to get. There are plenty of ways to uncover phone numbers – far more than I can list here, but it all starts with saying to yourself, "I'm not going to let an obstacle stand in my way."

Using the telephone is awesome, because of the immediacy it can bring to the process when you can reach someone. Regardless of the industry or the type of prospect you're trying to reach, you must keep the telephone in your mix of tools you use.

Your objective is to use the telephone and to be prepared for any phone call to either go to voicemail or to a live person. Leaving a voicemail is dramatically different than talking to someone live. Be ready regardless of which way it goes.





## **AND THE BIGGEST ONE OF ALL? THINKING PROSPECTING IS A WASTE OF TIME.**

When looking at why most prospecting plans fail, this one ranks as an overall attitude many salespeople take. They think prospecting is a waste of time!

Extraordinary salespeople, however, know that keeping their pipeline full of viable prospects means viewing prospecting as a vital part of selling!

**Be extraordinary.  
You can get there from here!**



## Mark Hunter

Mark Hunter, “The Sales Hunter,” is recognized as one of the top 50 most influential sales and marketing leaders in the world. He is author of “High-Profit Selling: Win the Sale Without Compromising on Price.”

Mark helps companies identify better prospects, close more sales and profitably build more long-term customer relationships. Since 1998, Mark has conducted thousands of training programs and keynotes on sales. He is best known for his ability to motivate and move an organization through his high-energy presentations.

He spent more than 18 years in the sales and marketing divisions of three Fortune 200 companies. During his career, he led many projects, including the creation of a new 200-member sales force responsible for volume in excess of \$700 million. Mark has held sales management roles in teams ranging in size from 20 to 900 members. This level of experience is at the core of every program he delivers to thousands of people each year in the areas of sales, communication and leadership.

Mark Hunter not only has expertise in sales, but also knows how to communicate it to others. This is seen best by his travel schedule and the 50+ speaking events he does each year throughout the United States and Canada and around the world.

Visit [www.TheSalesHunter.com](http://www.TheSalesHunter.com), where Mark blogs regularly on tips that can transform your sales career. You can also connect with him here:



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