

VALESKA LEFRANC

Find your
CUSTOMERS
today



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Develop Your Business

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ISBN numérique : 979-10-405-1420-6

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A short word up front

Prospecting. Don't you just hate it? Most people do. Quite a pity, actually, as prospecting is a crucial stage in the sales process. Extremely challenging, a lot of people will say. And terribly difficult, they will add. Like if it were fighting an evil dragon with several fire-spitting heads.

Well, it's not.

At the end of the day, it's just a dialogue. A simple check whether a service, product or collaboration could be beneficial to the person or group of people you're addressing. And it's so rewarding.

Believe me, I know what I'm talking about, after 25 years of prospecting. Yes, *twenty-five* years. That's what I can look back on. Does that make me feel old? Not at all. In fact, it makes me feel rich with experience. In all those years, prospecting for automotive, tourism, telco, software, consulting, advertising and communications, telecom and IT companies, fashion and start-ups, or chocolate-tasting tours, I have never encountered the slightest difficulty in opening the door and walking in to propose my product. Or in picking up the phone and making a cold call, for that matter. Actually, I have always found it exciting to talk to strangers about deliverables that I sincerely believe in, that I am convinced are effective and are a potential solution for my prospect.

*A **cold call** is an unsolicited telephone call or visit to someone, aimed at starting the dialogue about the goods or services you wish to propose.*

You would think I was born for prospecting. Well, I'm not. It's a skill that anyone can develop. I, myself, fell in love with it. Not that I ever dreamt of getting to that point. I simply found my path as I went along. Each time, in each company I worked for, each team I coached, I always managed to make a real difference. To reveal a part of the secret: I was greatly

inspired by the American market which, it must be said, is very avant-garde for all prospecting campaigns. Thank you, USA, for the know-how that I was able to build up over all those years!

A prospecting campaign aims at reeling in potential customers through a well-defined theme, via a selected database. It tends to be managed by business developers or the inside sales department.

I see my knowledge about this domain as a ball of golden yarn that I've gradually been spinning, and which I'm happy to pass on in my training and lectures.

Surely you'll agree that everybody who has a commercial activity needs to prospect. One day or another you face the moment when you just have to prospect if you want to move on up.

The first question comes to mind, then: who are my potential customers? Where are they? How should I approach them? What are the dos and don'ts? This is what this book will illuminate, putting all my expertise at your service.

I'm convinced that it will help you to develop your business.

This book's for you

As I mentioned, prospection in itself is not a difficult task.

You just need to:

1. Select
2. Speak

3. Listen

4. Follow up

These four activities are accessible to everyone. It's all a question of having some guts and knowing the ropes. And that's where this book fits in: to reveal the ins and outs of prospecting; to make the art of prospecting feasible for everyone.

'Everyone'? Does that sound like a vague generalisation? Well, let's specify then. This book contains interesting advice for the entrepreneur, the manager, the retailer, the freelancer, the head of the sales team, both the start-up and the established company, the whole B2B domain and, while we're at it, the whole B2C domain...

Now that's just about everyone, isn't it? As any company or organisation needs to be profitable, they are all at some point or another looking for new customers. I do admit, those potential new customers are difficult to locate. Yet rest assured, this book will cover all possible and – please note – attainable tracks in order to develop the reader's customer portfolio.

Enough said. Off we go.

1. Prospecting is golden

What prospecting is and how important it is for each organisation

Glittering goal

Before we elaborate on what prospecting is, let's bring in the dictionary to learn the definition of the verb 'to prospect'. (Don't worry, it will be expelled from this narrative right after performing its duty.)

to prospect \

(verb, used without object)

'to search or explore a region for gold or the like'¹

Well, that says it all, doesn't it! To look for gold, how exciting is that!

OK, I admit, that's what it meant back in 1834, in a general sense. Later on, it infiltrated the marketing lingo, and acquired this definition:

to prospect: to approach a database of likely customers in order to develop your business

Not far off looking for gold now, is it!

In this sense, prospecting is obviously a commercial activity, often dovetailing a marketing campaign. It can be carried out in thousands of ways: phoning, mailing, dropping by... Yet these approaches all have one thing in common: many salespeople would rather go to the dentist than prospect.

I'm not exaggerating. Or maybe only slightly.

Many texts advocate the automation of marketing actions and business development, and yes, many tools are very effective. Yet there always comes a time when it is utterly unavoidable to enter that phone number in order to take your business to the next level and close the sale.

Inevitable, inescapable, instrumental

Allow me to hammer it home: prospecting is key for any company in any domain. Because every single company needs to develop, commercially speaking. It always needs new customers. It must always ensure the permanent development of its portfolio. If a company does not develop, it risks losing speed and leaving too much space for its competitors. To put it simply: if you don't prospect, your competitor will.

Your competitor will not only prospect for leads in your market but will most certainly hunt for your customers as well. Not setting up a business development department, an inside sales team or simply a lead generation marketing campaign is a strategic mistake that few companies can afford to make.

Inside sales: the person or department in charge of prospecting, usually working in collaboration with a field salesperson or account manager. The prospecting is mostly done via phone, email or the internet.

Lead generation (often referred to as lead gen) is the process of attracting possible leads and encouraging them submit their contact information to you. This could be done via job applications, blog posts, coupons, live events, online content, you name it.

Do I hear someone muttering back there that marketing already generates leads? Sure it does, critical listener; thank you for pointing that out. The point is: you shouldn't place all your bets on it.

Prospecting can be translated into different actions. And it can have different forms, from putting out campaigns on social media or organising sponsoring events, to publishing posts on LinkedIn or gathering data via your website. The source might be the marketing department, the training department, the PR team, HR, the digital team... Yet, at the end of the day, you do need to find the quickest and shortest route to your next customer.

Prospecting: what actually is it?

Prospecting means contacting people or businesses in order to search for new potential customers.

At the first stage, you don't know for sure whether the person you are to contact is interested in your product or service. That kind of contact is called a *lead*. When a lead turns out to be interested or expresses interest, they become a prospect; in other words, a potential client.

Once a first purchase has been made, your prospect becomes your customer.

Finding ways to generate your prospect's interest in your company or product and stimulating them to request more information is called 'lead generation'. (For good understanding, 'generation' does not refer to a group of people of the same age, but to the act of generating something. In this case: leads.)

Beware, how one precisely understands 'lead' can be very different from one company to another. Generally referring to a person or a company, the lead can be 'cold', 'warm', 'hot' or 'qualified'.

Although a lead originally referred to someone who has not yet shown interest, or, in other words, who is not yet qualified as a prospect, the term is being used more and more in an extended meaning. In that case it is often divided into the following categories...

- **a cold lead** fits your ideal buyer criteria yet has never shown any interest in your product, service or company; they do not expect to be contacted.
- **a warm lead** has expressed interest in your product or company but does not have a sense of urgency or specific timeline to conduct a purchase. A typical example would be a prospect who visited your