

COLD CALLING SUCKS



(And That's Why It Works)

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO
CALLING STRANGERS IN SALES



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Founders of the #1 Sales Podcast, *30 Minutes to President's Club*

Cold Calling Sucks (And That's Why It Works)

Sneak Peek: Introduction and Chapter One (Openers)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: 5 Minutes to Figure Out if This Book is Worth Your Time

Section I: The First 60 Seconds

Chapter 1: Openers

Chapter 2: The Problem Proposition

Section II: The Rest of The Call

Chapter 3: How to Handle Objections Like Mr. Miyagi

Chapter 4: 18 Objections and Scripts to Handle Each

Chapter 5: Voicemails and Gatekeepers

Section III: How to Be a Machine

Chapter 6: How to Maximize Your Dial Conversion

Chapter 7: How to Maximize Your Dial Volume

Conclusion: How to Kill Call Reluctance Forever

5 Minutes to Figure Out if This Book is Worth Your Time

Agenda

- Why should you cold call at all?
- Why should you believe anything we're saying?
- What can you expect from this book?



“Okay bud. What’s your secret?”

The new VP of Sales in town, Stef, was doing everything he could to figure out why there were only 1 in 4 reps hitting their number. So he sat down every single rep that hit quota and drilled them with questions, one-by-one.

6 months prior, it was different. You had to be a complete buffoon to not hit quota.

The startup was red hot and there were so many inbound leads that reps had no reason to hunt for their own business. The CEO would literally compare the reps to bears sitting by a river with salmon jumping into their mouths.

But he wanted hungry bears.

So he doubled the sales team in 6 months to spread those inbound leads razor thin. And as expected, quota attainment shot through the floor.

One would think the old guard reps might do some outbound prospecting to fill the gap. Nope. Instead, they preferred to rip on the new hires that ruined the good days. Maybe they hoped that the unwelcome environment and miserable paydays would make the new blood quit (they did) and convince management that they should stop hiring (they didn't).

“Who’s that idiot making cold calls over there?”

That idiot was me. One of the lucky new hires.

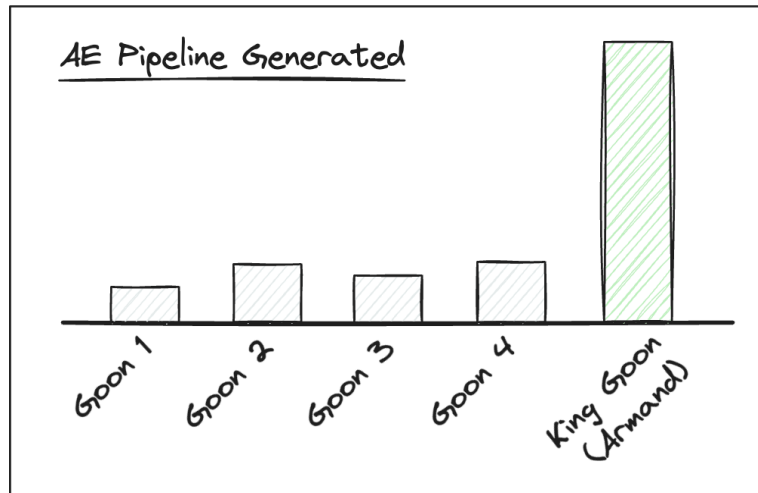
Fortunately, I previously sold insurance in a 100% commission, 100% outbound role. The thought of someone reaching out to *me* to buy my product was completely foreign. So I'd eat the free inbound fish they gave me, then make 200 dials per week to find even more.

And after 6 months, one hungry idiot bear topped the leaderboard:

Armand Farrokh – Q1 2019 Attainment: 264%

“Stef, it’s really simple. I prospect more than anyone else on this floor.”

I pulled up a Salesforce dashboard titled *AE Pipeline Generated* ...where one bar on the chart stuck out hilariously, like a sore thumb:



It was quite literally, 4 times the pipeline of the next best rep (to this day, I still have no idea what the hell they were doing for 40 hours per week).

“But John says that he prospects just as much as you?” He referred to the only other seller who had a reputation for outbound prospecting.

“He does. Almost. We both reach out to about 50 companies per week. But the difference is John mostly sends cold emails. I do that too, but I make *a lot* of cold calls.”

I continued: “I book 8 outbound meetings per week. 4 come from the phone and 4 come from email. So even against the next best outbounder on this team, I’m wringing twice as much juice out of every account in my territory.”

I walked Stef through every part of my prospecting process. His eyes lit up. It was the first *repeatable* sales process he’d seen in all of his interviews.

Every other old-guard AE said that the only way to succeed was to sit on a goldmine territory and survive long enough to build up your referral flow from your existing customers.

But when you get good at cold calling, you realize that it’s quite formulaic.

Opener. Pitch. Objections. Meeting.

It wasn't fun, but anyone could learn how to do it with the right pieces.

3 months later, Stef came back around and sat me down again.

"You're running the SDR org, bud."

Guess his turnaround plan was... me?

He put me in charge of 20 sales development representatives – the entry-level sellers who have one job and only one job: booking outbound meetings for the closers.

And over the next year, we doubled the SDR team but *tripled* their pipeline generation.

Why? Because we taught them to pick up the phone.

Cold calling sucks and that's why it works



Success in sales is determined by the number of uncomfortable conversations you're willing to have.

There's no place this rings truer than in cold calling.

Cold calling is painful and uncomfortable for every single salesperson on planet Earth. Most will do anything to avoid it.

And while this book will teach you some ways to make it *less* painful, you're in for a rough ride if you're not prepared to accept the following reality:

Cold calling sucks and there's nothing you can do to change that. But that's exactly why it works.

No matter how good you get, you're gonna be sworn at, told to *get a real job*, and treated like dirt by folks who wouldn't dare say those things if you were meeting them face-to-face.

So your average seller makes a couple dials, hits 6 voicemails, and gets their heart ripped out when the next prospect tells them to screw off... so they give up!

Then, they disguise their fear and anxiety in behaviors like:

- Complaining that cold calling is dead and no one answers the phone anymore
- Spending hours over-researching prospects who haven't even answered yet
- Claiming it's end of quarter so there's no time to prospect
- Following up with long-dead opportunities
- Checking their inbox 20 times a day

- Updating the CRM
- Scheduling cold calls at the “optimal time to dial”
- “Social Selling”

Why? Because there's an easy route.

Nowadays, you can send 400 prospecting emails in a click of a button without taking any interpersonal risk.

The problem is that *because* blasting cold emails is so easy, thousands of other sales reps are flooding your prospect's inboxes every single day.

Prospects open their inbox and bulk delete 20 of them as if it were their morning routine.

They're getting bombarded with so many sales emails that it's becoming harder and harder to cut through the noise, regardless of how “personalized” your emails are.

And when your quota is based on the *average* performance of reps on your team, you literally cannot beat the average if all you do is blast cold emails like everyone else.

So few salespeople are willing to consistently submit themselves to the discomfort of cold calling, that your competition is extremely slim.

There's no avoiding the suck of cold calling. But every time you decide to pick up the phone in spite of the suck, you separate yourself from the pack just a little bit more.

You can *still* play the game of who can send the best 400 emails per week, then every meeting you book from cold calling is gravy on top.

Cold emails can get you to quota. But cold calls will get you to President's Club.

The Math of a Top Quartile Cold Caller

Every day, you'll see a new “hot take” from someone on LinkedIn claiming that “cold calling is dead.”

And yes, if you try cold calling for 2 weeks and quit... your numbers will absolutely suck.

However, if you stick it out and commit to mastering your craft (which is what you're doing now by opening this book), you *will* reach the top 25% of cold callers.

But is that even worth it?

Let's find out. Assume you make 200 dials per week, for an entire month.

Using data from over 300 million cold calls recorded on Gong, they've provided data to show the radical difference between the average rep and the top quartile rep:

	Average Rep	Top Quartile Rep
# Dials ¹	800	800
# Connects ¹	43 (5.4%)	106 (13.3%)
# Meetings Booked ¹	2 (4.6%)	18 (16.7%)

The data shows that the average rep books 2 meetings and the top 25% rep books a whopping 18 meetings... from just *one hour* of cold calling per day.

So yeah, it sucks to be *average* at calling.

But if you learn to dial smart and master the craft... the top 10% of reps actually book 1 in 3 cold calls for even bigger results.

And that's why you're here. To be a top quartile dialer.

But wait, there's more! It's not just the meetings you'll get *on* the calls.

Cold calling nearly doubles your email reply rate even if you don't connect live:

	Without Cold Calls	With Cold Calls
Email Reply Rate	1.81%	3.44% (1.9x higher)

Every cold call you make and voicemail you leave draws attention back to your emails, so you book *even more* meetings across other channels.

So between those 27 extra meetings a month *and* whatever comes from the increase in your email reply rate of every email you send...

You're telling me it's not worth 1 hour a day to cold call?

Four Promises For The Most Actionable Book in Sales



Most sales books are a slew of random tips masquerading as advice. You read hundreds of pages filled with "hot takes" that cover up the fact that the author

¹ Data provided by Gong, citing the 50th and 75th percentile of sales reps.

can't actually break down a cold call step-by-step and hasn't picked up the phone since they sold pipe cleaners in 1972.

Maybe you finish the book feeling excited about the concept of cold calling, but then you realize when you pick up the phone, *you have no freaking idea what you should actually say.*

The world does not need more advice. It needs more structured advice. This book is structured to be the most actionable sales book in the world.

Here are our four promises to make that happen:

#1: We broke down every part of a cold call, step-by-step.

We'll assemble the pieces of a cold call in chronological order, like this:

- Section 1 teaches you to nail the first 60 seconds. Specifically, what the heck do you say when you open a cold call and how do you pitch your product?
- Section 2 covers the rest of the call. Three steps to handle *any* objection, talk tracks for 18 of them, tactics to bypass gatekeepers, and ways to maximize voicemail replies.
- Section 3 finishes with how to be a machine. How to get more meetings in fewer dials and how to make more dials in less time without sacrificing quality.

No matter how good you get at cold calling, you're going to get stuck at *some* point. Whenever that happens, you'll never have to guess what chapter you need to revisit.

#2: You'll hear voiceovers (embedded in QR codes) that allow you to master the tone.

Much of the nuance of a cold call is not just what you say, but *how you say it* – aka, your tone. You can say the exact same words as the #1 seller, but if you talk too fast, use too many uptones, or sound like a robot, your prospect will be able to tell.

So we recorded voiceovers for every talk track so you know exactly how you should sound when the words come out of your mouth. You'll notice, we don't always stick to the script word-for-word. It's okay to alter your talk tracks for what feels most natural in the moment.

#3: You'll be covered no matter what you sell.

We've built the #1 podcast in sales with millions of downloads per year. We've done over 200 interviews with elite sellers that made President's Club at all levels from VPs of Sales, to SDRs, to insurance agents, to managers, and everything in-between.

While those guests predominantly come from tech, this book will work *anywhere*.

As a VP of Sales, I led a fast-paced startup from \$100k to \$13M+ in ARR, but I cut my teeth selling insurance in my first sales job. Nick was a multiple-time #1 enterprise rep selling old school accounting software to attorneys, but today he sells advertising sponsorships for us.

Moreover, our audience consistently tells us that they steal the stuff from the best reps in tech (which tends to be ahead of the game) and use it in another industry to get an unfair advantage.

But to go the extra mile for this book, we took our experiences, our guests' experiences, *and* enlisted audience editors from different sales environments to ensure these concepts work *everywhere*:

- In every industry: The insights come from elite reps who've sold SaaS, sponsorships, insurance, real estate, pharma, elevators (yup), cell phone towers, and more.
- At every company: At companies like Salesforce, Keller Williams, LinkedIn, Gong, Northwestern Mutual... and dozens of SMBs with no brand recognition at all.
- With every prospect: With customers in HR, finance, legal, engineering, government, homeowners, and ordinary people in the US, Canada, Europe, Asia, and beyond.
- At every level: With advice that teaches even the #1 rep something new while still being accessible to a new grad with zero sales experience at all.

While the products, personas, and industries might change, the underlying principles will apply whether you're selling software, real estate, insurance, pipe cleaners, or dog food.

#4: You'll find data to back it all up.

There's so much unsubstantiated advice out there that *sounds* good but sucks in practice. We partnered with Gong to back the advice with data from over 300 million cold calls.

Their dataset comes from running the #1 revenue intelligence platform to engage prospects, analyze sales calls, and forecast deals for over 4,000 sales teams across industries.

And no, they didn't pay to be in the book.

We picked them because they're the single most-trusted source for sales data, proven by the fact that they run the #1 data-backed blog in sales.

You'll find that data that not only helps you benchmark your call success, but also validates the specific talks we cite.

Do not use this book as an excuse



Before you embark on your cold calling journey, I want to underscore one thing. There is no book, podcast, course, or training in the world that'll teach you more than actually making cold calls.

We didn't write this as an exercise in sales academia. We wrote it to get you to President's Club. The only way you'll learn what actually works is by putting the lessons into action and making *real* cold calls at the end of every chapter instead of hiding behind a book.

So we're providing two free resources below that will allow you to take action *today*.

1. **A basic cold calling framework** that you can use to win the first 60 seconds of a call. I used this framework when I sold legal software and still use it to sell 30MPC sponsorships today.
2. **Our cold calling playbook episode from the podcast**, which breaks down the key parts of a cold call step-by-step – including how you should *sound* on the phones.

This won't cover every opener you could use or objection you'll need to handle, but it's absolutely enough to get started.

So scan the QR codes on the next page and queue them up for your next commute to work.

Let's get ready to hit the phones.

Your Minimum Viable Cold Calling Resources

Resource #1: Your Minimum Viable Cold Calling Framework	
You (Tailored Permission Opener): Emma, I just finished reading your press release about your new office opening. I'm gonna be honest, this is a cold call, but it is a well-researched one. Can I get 30 seconds to tell you why that press release prompted me to call you specifically, then you can tell me whether or not it makes sense for us to speak? Prospect: Sure. You (Problem Proposition): The reason I'm calling you is, most of the CFOs of insurance defense law firms think it's ridiculous that they have to deal with so many deductions, rejections, and appeals they get from insurance carriers after winning a big case. We help other insurance defense law firms cut down on bill appeals by alerting attorneys to billing guideline violations right when they're doing their time entries... And I'm wondering if you might be open to learning more when I'm not completely calling you out of the blue?	Lead with context Own the cold call Get permission to pitch Triggering problem 1-sentence solution Interest-based CTA
	

Resource #2: The Cold Calling Playbook Episode


Pro Tip: Find An Accountability Partner



Like we said, cold calling is really hard. You might be on a sales floor where you're the only one owning your professional development. If that's the case, then congrats to you. We hope this book becomes your unfair advantage that gets you to #1 on the leaderboard.

But there's usually *at least* one other person on the team who's getting after it like you.

You'll retain much more information (and have more fun along the way) if you read this with your cold calling partner in crime:

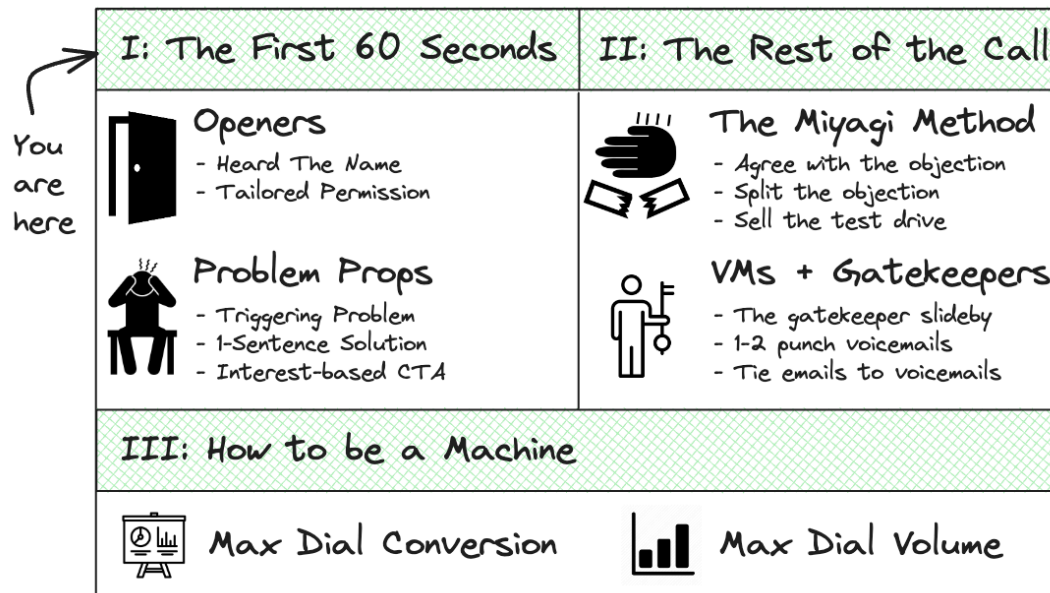
- You'll hold each other accountable to 200 dials this week.
- You'll roleplay a new opener or objection.
- You'll laugh off the most ridiculous prospect reactions.
- You'll coach each other's calls and get out of the echo chamber of your own brain.

Tip: Nick and I don't do the whole "read every chapter together" thing so that we can read at our own pace. But whenever we finish, we have a shared language of concepts that we can reference in the game of sales and business to win together every day.

So if you've got two thumbs and a friend, go shoot out a few text messages and see if they'll join you for the ride.

But don't let that stop you from reading Chapter 1 now.

Section I: The First 60 Seconds



Most cold calls are won or lost within the first 60 seconds.

They end in brisk hang-ups and dismissals because every seller is using the same openers, making the same tone mistakes, and using the same buzzword-filled pitches that immediately categorize you as a telemarketer.

The goal of the first 60 seconds is to *earn* the next 60 seconds. If you can get past the first 60 seconds, that's when you're actually having a conversation instead of being brushed off.

And the way you do that is by mastering the two components that comprise the first minute of a cold call:

Chapter 1 covers Openers: How do you get a complete stranger to hear you out when you called them out of the blue?

Chapter 2 covers Problem Propositions: How do you talk about your product in a way that doesn't make you sound like a Billy Mays commercial?

Let's dive in.

Chapter 1: Openers

Agenda

- ☐ Why most cold calls are lost in the first 30 seconds
- ☐ The Heard The Name Tossed Around Opener
- ☐ The Tailored Permission Based Opener



“Hi, this is Armand from Northwestern Mutual. How’s your day going?”

Click

*God, this job f***ing sucks.*

It was my first ever sales job and it felt like hang-up #772. I was a month into my college internship selling insurance and I couldn’t book a meeting to save my life.

At the start of the internship, you’d assemble a list of 200 people you knew who might be interested in financial planning. But when you’re 19, that list runs dry pretty early on.

You call your parents... then your uncle... then your cousin... then your barber...and next thing you know, nobody wants to talk to you at Thanksgiving.

Most interns burned through their warm network in a month, then quit. But I was broke and I needed money, so after finding a new barber (literally), I decided to go cold. Every day I would pick a new law firm in Los Angeles and cold call every single partner in the building.

Never in my life have I been verbally eviscerated so badly.

800 dials. 0 meetings booked. I lost every call in the first 60 seconds.

They’d answer in a semi-friendly tone, but the moment I asked “how’s your day going?” their tone of voice would shift. I could suddenly feel their impatience brewing like I was on a cold calling shot clock. It’s like they could *smell* the young, inexperienced, desperate life insurance salesman through the phone.

From there, they'd rip me apart. One guy said "there's no way in hell I'm taking your money advice." Another said "go get a real job, kid" immediately after my opener and hung up.

As hard-headed as I was, I was starting to believe they were right. I felt like I was slowly turning into the one thing nobody ever wants to be: a telemarketer.

And just as I was getting ready to call it quits, a top producer named Brandon Hoffman walked by and had a brief conversation with me that'd change my life.

Brandon was one of the rare survivors in the feast-or-famine game of insurance. Most reps barely paid their rent, but the few that made it to the top grossed seven-figures.

He was only 32, but I'm telling you: When the guy walked by, he *smelled* like money. Slicked back curly hair, Rolex watch, the letters "BH" stitched into the cuff of his custom navy suit, and one of the few guys that actually could get away without wearing a tie in the office.

When he walked by, the entire intern floor was empty except for a lone idiot (me) making cold calls to pay for a \$5 footlong at Subway. To be honest, I think he felt bad for me. So he stopped by to give me some advice:

"Hey man, it's gonna be really hard to get anyone to take money advice from you."

(Yeah, great advice dude.)

"But you're working hard."

"Thanks man, I'm trying."

"If I was in your shoes, I'd call all the partners in the Skadden Law office and say: I work with a few other partners in the office. It's Brandon Hoffman from Northwestern, have you heard my name tossed around?"

"But I don't work with any of those people. And they *definitely* have not heard my name tossed around."

"They probably haven't heard mine either. It doesn't matter. It's about showing that you work with other people of their stature. That's the difference between a telemarketer and an advisor."

He continued: "Bring me along, I'll close the deals, and we'll split them 50/50. If they want references, I'll share them live. But they're not even gonna remember what you said on the call."

He walked away with the final words: "Just give it a shot, kid. What do you have to lose?"

I was massively skeptical. The line felt like a cringey flex. But he was right, I had nothing to lose.

So I dropped my tone of voice 3 notches to sound like I was *at least* 23, and gave it a swing:

“Hey Bill, we work with a few other partners in the Skadden LA office. Armand from Northwestern, heard my name tossed around?”

“Well, no I haven’t. But, how can I help you?”

...Oh friendly now, aren’t we?

I didn’t know what was supposed to come next and I’d barely made it this far in the past. So I followed up with my mediocre but brief pitch: a one-sentence summary of how we help other law firm partners invest while saving on taxes.

I kid you not. 2 minutes later, Bill booked the meeting.

I couldn’t believe it. Same law firm. Same pitch. Same 19 year old kid without confidence. Only one freaking thing changed: the way that I opened the cold call.

It had to be a fluke. I kept going.

“Heard the name tossed around?” 2 meetings booked.

“Heard the name tossed around?” 3 meetings booked.

40 dials in, I literally booked 3 meetings in a single session alone. More meetings in 1 hour than I had in the *entire* last 4 weeks of cold calling combined.

The entire demeanor of the cold call was changed by leading with social proof instead of introducing myself and asking “how’s your day going?” or “did I catch you at a bad time?”

Even if I didn’t book a meeting, the conversations would last longer because they didn’t want to eviscerate someone who might work with one of their peers.

This got me to the *other parts* of the call so I could sharpen the pitch, practice the objections, and build a full playbook that allowed me to book meetings off 1 in 4 conversations.

But you need the opener to *gain access* to the next 60 seconds.

We’ll break it down in just a few pages. But in order to do that, we need to explain why most cold call openers immediately categorize you as a telemarketer.

The Two Worst Ways to Open a Cold Call



99.9% of cold calls come from unprofessional telemarketers, blindly dialing through the phone book trying to sell extended car warranties, sketchy business loans, and predatory student loan refinancing packages.

Like it or not, your prospect is going to lump you in with these folks when you call them, and it's your job to quickly disavow them of this perception.

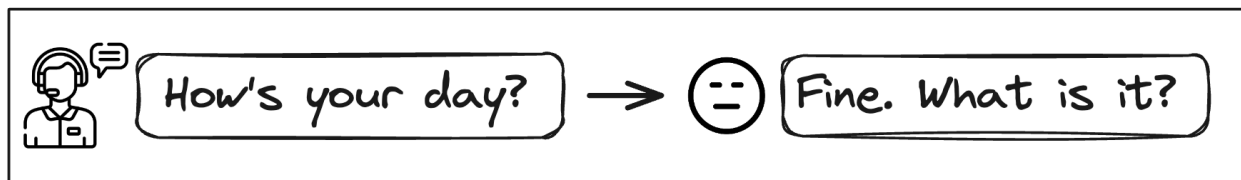
When your prospect answers your cold call, their radar is on high alert for any cues that tell them you're another "worthless telemarketer" that they should hang up on:

- The overly-chipper tone
- The slightest tremble in the voice
- The canned openers that everyone else uses
- The robotic pitch that shows you *obviously* didn't research them

Everything you do and say on a cold call must *sound* and *feel* different than the typical cold calls your prospect usually receives.

That's why the following two cold call openers are banned from your dictionary because they categorize you as a telemarketer within the first 5 seconds of a call.

Banned Opener #1: How's your day going?



You and I both know you don't really care about the day of the person on the other end of the line. You're not calling random CFOs to inquire about the "quality" of their afternoon...you're trying to sell them something.

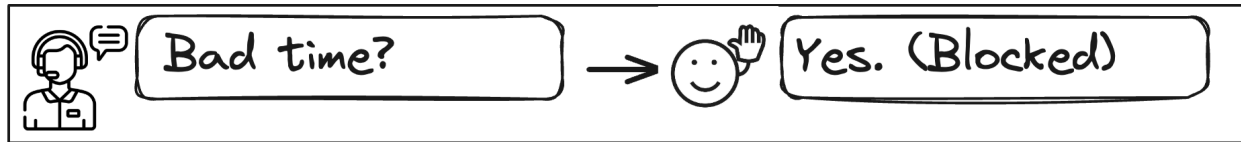
You know it, I know it, and *they* know it. Inevitably, what you'll hear in return is a deep sigh (because you're wasting their time), followed by, "I'm fine, what's this regarding?"

That's codeword for: "What are you trying to sell me, telemarketer?"

Furthermore, even if you are some sort of lunatic empath who actually cares about every prospect's day, it doesn't matter.

Nearly *every* salesperson uses this opener, and your prospect won't be able to distinguish your sincerity from every other call. It only lumps you in with the rest of the telemarketers.

Banned Opener #2: Did I catch you at a bad time?



You're making a *cold* call. Of course it's a bad time. I can't count the number of times I've seen a prospect say "yes, it's a bad time," then never answer your call ever again as if they were part of the witness protection program.

This is the equivalent of the "Dear Sir / Madam" greeting. It lowers your status in the eyes of the prospect, as if they'd be so gracious as to spare you a moment of their attention. It was clearly a good enough time for them to have answered the phone, so don't back track to ask them if you bothered them as if you were a pest.

And just like the last one, this is a dead giveaway that you're a telemarketer. You'll hear the exact same sigh because you've categorized yourself with the rest.

Bonus Banned Opener: Is this Bob?

This isn't really an opener, but it's worth calling out.

When you ask whether or not you have the right person, you make it *extremely obvious* that you don't actually know the person's voice and you're a stranger (aka, a telemarketer). You're better off assuming you have the right person and going right into your *actual* opener.

Don't worry. If they're *not* the prospect you think they are, they'll correct you. Better to deal with that occasional awkwardness than burning every prospect you call by asking them to confirm their name.

How should you open a cold call instead?



So, how do you avoid coming off like a telemarketer?

You open the cold call with context about *them* – a mutual investor, another partner that you work with in the same office, a customer in the same industry, or anything that demonstrates that you're not a complete stranger.

Leading with context completely changes the demeanor of the call for 3 reasons:

1. The Sit-Up Moment: They sit up and realize you might actually work with their peers, so you're not a complete rando that they can treat like trash without it coming back to them.
2. Can't Be Canned: Context-first openers *can't* be canned even if everyone in the world adopted them, because the context is unique to the prospect.
3. Telemarketer Perception Snapped: You demonstrate that you took the time to research them in the first 5 seconds of a cold call, which sets you apart from the spam callers.

There are two context-first openers we'll provide to do this in practice: The Heard The Name Tossed Around Opener and The Tailored Permission Opener.

And if you're skeptical, I get it. Maybe you haven't heard us talk about these openers before. You probably haven't seen them in the field. And when every other seller uses those traditional (banned) openers, you have every right to have your doubts.

Fortunately, you don't have to take our word for it. Here's the data from Gong on which cold call openers are most likely to convert to a meeting:

Opener	Success Rate vs Baseline
BANNED: Did I catch you at a bad time?	1x
BANNED: How's it going?	3.8x
Permission-Based Opener	5.59x
Heard The Name Tossed Around	5.62x

So if you want to keep rolling with "did I catch you at a bad time?" then be my guest.

For everyone else, let's go back to The Heard The Name Tossed Around Opener.

Opener 1: The Heard The Name Tossed Around Opener



There are three main pieces to the opener as broken down below:

Talk Track: The Heard The Name Tossed Around Opener	Steps
Hey Bill, we work with a few other partners in the Skadden LA office. It's Armand from Northwestern... Heard the name tossed around?	Lead with context THEN intro yourself Heard the name?

Lead with context before you say *anything else*, even your name. The first words that come out of your mouth determine whether or not the prospect listens to anything else you say.

To create the *sit-up moment*, you need to find a common thread between you and them. For me, it was the fact that we worked with other partners in their office.

But even when I was at a 9-employee company with under 50 customers, you can almost always find *some* common thread between your current customers (or even the open opportunities in your pipeline) and your prospects. Some examples include:

- Same Investor: “We work with a few other Sequoia portfolio companies.”
- Same Coworkers: “We work with a few other Partners in the Downtown LA office.”
- Same Situation: “We work with a few other multifamily homeowners down the block.”
- Same Industry Peers: “We work with a few folks like Gong and Salesforce.”
- Same Geo + Persona: “We work with other compensation leaders in Salt Lake City.”

The more specific you can get, the better. You'll notice the last one was a combination between geography and persona to make it feel close to home. But opening with “we work with other professionals who breathe” isn't particularly compelling.

Now, you're ready to introduce yourself and ask the question. “It's Armand from Northwestern, heard the name tossed around?”

The final question is the twist at the end of the punch. You already got Bill to sit up by telling him that you work with his peers, and now you're going to lean into it *even more*. We want him thinking: *I haven't heard of them... but should I have?*

Now: You can say all the right words, but if your tone sounds unsure or overly-stiff like a telemarketer (aka, *not* a peer) this opener is going to fall flat.

Nailing The Tone: The Heard The Name Tossed Around Opener

Imagine you're leaning back in the chair with your feet up on the desk. You should sound assumptive, as if you're *expecting them* to know you. Imagine you're calling a referral (*Hey Jane, we both know Nick. He gave you a heads up that I'd be calling, right?*).



How I actually sat when recording this one – lean back, feet up

The two most common tone mistakes here are over-enunciation and upward inflection.

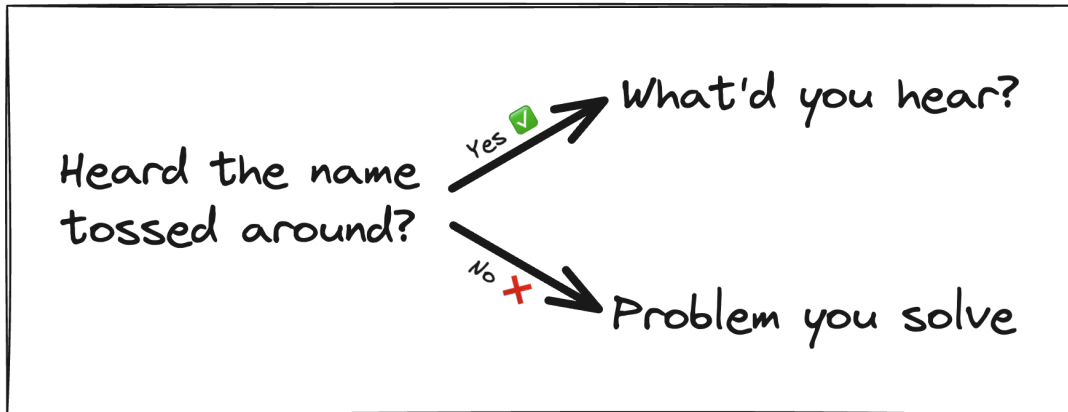
- Over enunciation makes you sound stiff, like you're reading off a billboard (*Welcome to this cold call, we work with a number of partners in the law firm!*).
- Upward inflection makes you sound unsure (*We work with a few other partners in the office? it's Armand... at Northwestern Mutual?*).

Have a buddy record you having a normal conversation when you're not expecting it. Listen to that tape – that's *exactly* how you should sound on a cold call. Chances are, you sound much more casual and your sentences end in a downtone.

This is much easier heard than written, so here are two examples: a bad one using over-enunciation and upward inflection, and a better one using that “Feet-Up” tone.

Stiff (Bad) Example	Feet-Up (Good) Example
	

Transitions after “Heard The Name Tossed Around?”



After you ask the question, they'll either answer yes or no. To be clear: It does not matter if they've heard your name tossed around. It's about making it seem like they *should have*.

The vast majority of people will say "no," so let's start there.

You *have* to stay in character, even if they haven't heard your name tossed around. Joke and laugh as if they *should have* heard your name tossed around. If you come off as startled or suddenly stiff, you have revealed your "rando" mask.

I'll say something like:

- "Ha! Guess I'm not as popular as I thought. Well, the reason for my call is..."
- "Ha! Guess I'll have to blame marketing for that one. Well, the reason for my call is..."
- "Ha! Guess that makes this a good old cold call. Well, the reason for my call is..."

From there, you go into a very short pitch (to be covered in the next chapter).

But if they *have* heard your name tossed around, then guess what? You don't need to pitch.

Instead, jump in with the following line: "*Oh good, we'd normally be working with someone like you by now. What'd you hear?*"

From there, they usually still have no clue what you do. So you end up giving the same pitch that you'd give if they said no anyway.

To recap: lead with context, then introduce yourself, then ask if they've heard your name tossed around.

From there, regardless of their answer, it's time to deliver your pitch, which we call a Problem Proposition. But hang tight because that's the topic of Chapter 2.

First, let's give you another opener that's quite different from my approach because it *leans into* the cold call: The Tailored Permission Opener.

Opener 2: The Tailored Permission Opener



Mediocre telemarketers use false pleasantries to hide the fact that they're making a cold call, but a prospect can smell that nonsense from a mile away.

The Tailored Permission Opener works because it *owns* that you're making a cold call and disarms the prospect with brutal honesty.

There are three steps to this opener: lead with context (again), own the cold call, then get permission to pitch. Here's what that looks like:

Talk Track: The Tailored Permission Opener	Steps
Emma, I just finished reading your press release about your new office opening.	Lead with context
I'm gonna be honest, this is a cold call, but it is a well-researched one.	Own the cold call
Can I get 30 seconds to tell you why that press release prompted me to call you specifically, then you can tell me whether or not it makes sense for us to speak?	Get permission to pitch

Just like The Heard The Name Tossed around opener, lead with context in step 1 to differentiate yourself from the blind spam dialers.

The key here is to lead with context related to a problem you solve, instead of a random piece of information (like their alma mater).

For example, when I sold accounting software to law firms, I would lead with things like:

- "I just read about the big case win" (which means they'd be collecting money)
- "I just saw you opened a new office" (which has tax implications)
- "I was reading up on the new litigation practice" (which adds billing complexity)

When you lead with context related to the problem you solve, it allows you to *attach* the context to your pitch, which we'll cover in the next chapter. That's far more powerful than saying "hey, I noticed you went to LSU," then randomly transitioning to a pitch on billing software.

After leading with context, we'll come clean that this is indeed, a good ol' cold call.

"I'm gonna be honest, this is a cold call, but it is a well-researched cold call."

There's a reason prospects often angrily react to calls with, "is this a cold call!?"

They *know* it's a cold call! And it pisses them off when you try to mask your intentions with pleasantries and schmoozing. That's why they'll call you out even *more* aggressively out of spite.

But it's really hard to get mad when you *acknowledge* that you're interrupting their day.

You reveal the human behind the phone because your words and tone read: *No one loves cold calls, I get it. But hear me out because I'm the only one who actually took a second to learn something about you before I called.*

You will run the risk of coming across as low-status if you sound timid or ashamed when you fess up that it's a cold call. You can prevent that from happening by confidently leaning into humor here. Try phrases like:

- "I know I'm an interruption."
- "I hate to break it you, but this is a cold call"
- "You're probably gonna hate me for this, but this is a cold call"

Sound a little cheeky and like you're having a fun time here, not like you're terrified of the prospect, and you'll actually *increase* your status.

Last, ask for permission to pitch and give them perceived control.

"Can I get 30 seconds to tell you why that press release prompted me to call you specifically, then you can tell me whether or not it makes sense for us to speak?"

Make clear exactly how long you need and that you'll let them decide if they want to keep talking after those 30 seconds. It feels counterintuitive, but when your prospect has say over the outcome of the call, they feel safe to agree to hear and *actually listen to* your pitch.

They'll almost always let you proceed, and some will even reply tongue-in-cheek with "alright, I'm counting *exactly* 30 seconds."

You've turned their brain back on. They're not confused about what you want or fighting you to get off the phone. They're listening to your next 30 seconds to decide if what you sell is worth their time.

And it's all because you led with context, owned the cold call and let them decide if they wanted to opt-in to your pitch.

In the rare case that they say no or hang up, we'll cover those objections in Chapter 4. But most prospects will give you permission to pitch, which is what we'll cover next.

Nailing The Tone: The Tailored Permission Opener

If you come in overly chipper, gung-ho, or intense, their guard will stay up because you *sound* like the telemarketer who'll pressure sell them no matter how they respond. And if you sound scared or anxious, you'll seem too junior and low-status to hear out. **Instead your tone should sound confident and like you're arms-up with nothing to hide.**



Me on a real cold call, saying "this is a cold call" with my arms-up

I literally put my arms up in the air when I say this opener.

It should sound like *hey, I know you don't love this, it is what it is, but at least I took the time to research you unlike all the other goons.*

You really want them to hear the human on the other line, but also feel like you understand that no one loves cold calls and it's okay to say "no."

Here are some examples:

Chipper (Bad) Example	Arms-up (Good) Example
	

What about The (Untailored) Permission-Based Opener?

There will be times that you either can't find observable information about your prospect to include in your opener or you just don't have time to do the research.

In that event, you'll still find success with an untailored, traditional permission-based opener, which sounds something like:

Talk Track: The Untailored Permission Opener	Steps
Emma, my name's Nick with 30MPC – You're gonna hate me, but this is indeed a cold call. Mind if I take 30 seconds to share why I called you specifically and then you can totally hang up on me if it doesn't make sense to speak from there?	Own the cold call (NO CONTEXT) Get permission to pitch

This one is less effective than the Tailored Permission Opener since there's no context. Your prospect has no idea why you're calling – you could be selling accounting software or you could be calling from a collections agency. You run the risk that they *don't* give you permission or get caught completely off-guard and interrupt you halfway through your pitch.

But if you didn't have the time to research or couldn't find anything, this one isn't bad.

These openers get you past the first 30 seconds of a cold call, but now it's on you to explain to your prospect what the heck you do. This is where most sales reps inadvertently re-categorize themselves as telemarketers by hurling their "pitch" or "value proposition" at their prospect.

So in the next chapter, we'll throw your traditional value proposition in the trash. Chapter 2 is all about The Problem Proposition.

Top Four Actionable Takeaways: Chapter One
● Avoid These 2 Openers: Never use "how's your day going?" or "did I catch you at a bad time?" because they immediately categorize you as a telemarketer. ● Lead With Context: You can break the telemarketer perception in the first 5 seconds by leading with something you know about them. ● The Heard The Name Tossed Around Opener: Lead with context, then introduce yourself, then ask if they've heard your name tossed around. ● The Tailored Permission Opener: Lead with context, own the cold call, then get permission to pitch.

Chapter 1 Homework: The Streets of San Francisco



You see a tourist trolley. I see cold call practice.

In my voiceover of The Heard The Name Tossed Around Opener, you might've noticed some intentional stutters and "um's" to make it sound natural – as if I'm actually calling a referral out of the blue.

That's 100% by design. The stutters always fall in the exact same place every single time I say it, because I've said the opener over 10,000 times (literally).

You might be thinking: "There's no way you practiced your opener on 10,000 prospects." If so, you're absolutely correct.

You don't need to connect with 10,000 prospects to practice your opener 10,000 times. If you only practiced on prospects, you'd have to make 2000 cold calls to get 100 reps in. You can accomplish that in a single hour of solo practice.

When I was in my first AE role in San Francisco, I'd walk to work with a Jabra headset on, but there wouldn't be anyone on the other line. I'd repeat The Heard The Name Tossed Around Opener over and over again until I could get it to sound perfectly smooth.

Your homework is to practice your opener 100 times on your next commute. I'm dead serious: turn off the music in your car or walk the streets with a headset on. 100 reps.

Your opener will sound canned if you only practice on prospects.