



# 17 Tips

to Take Your  
Prospecting Skills  
to the Next Level



RAIN Group

# Change Your Prospecting Mindset

Sixty-six percent of respondents agree that people in their organization don't dedicate enough time or energy to prospecting, according to our [Top Performance in Sales Prospecting research](#).

This means the majority of sellers believe their teams don't prospect enough while *actively avoiding* prospecting themselves.

When successful prospecting means stronger pipelines, more qualified opportunities, and increased closes, our goal is to help sellers like you change your mindset.

Use the 17 tips that follow as a roadmap to carve out time and focus on the most impactful prospecting activities.

**50%**

It's challenging for me to get into prospecting mode

**56%**

I procrastinate when it comes to my prospecting activities

**66%**

Prospecting is the least appealing part of what I do in sales

# 01. Focus on quality, not quantity

To some degree, sales is a numbers game. But it's not just about the numbers. The key is to create *quality* conversations.

The best sellers have strict qualification criteria and don't waste their time with prospects who aren't at the right level, companies that aren't the right fit, or buyers who don't have the funds to spend. Top performers work hard to find out this information early on so they don't spend their precious time on prospects who aren't going to go anywhere.



## 02. Target effectively

The strength of your list and the precision of your targeting will determine how successful your prospecting efforts are. Sellers often skip calling decision makers in an effort to target someone lower on the organizational chart and work their way up.

Instead, start with the person who can make the decision about purchasing your products or services. Make sure your list is clean and ready to go before you start or you'll find that your day is lost in fits and starts.



# 03. Do your homework

Doing your research is essential to making the sales discovery process as valuable as it can be.

**For the meeting:** Gather information from the buyer by asking them to respond to a few questions sent in an email or survey so you can make customized recommendations for their situation.

**For the prospect:** Review your contact's LinkedIn profile, read the company's website and news coverage, check out public-facing social media pages, and ask contacts who know something about the company so you can deliver a high-impact experience.

**For your tool box:** Buyers may trust your offerings or company, but if you don't have a strong understanding of both your industry and theirs, they won't be likely to trust your guidance. You need to know, for your industry and the buyer's, the:

- Industry itself, including the players, associations, and companies
- News of the day, and the competitive landscape
- Details of who's rising and falling, and who's acquired whom
- Strengths of each competitor

Join groups, mailing lists, and associations; read what you should; and make it a habit to become a well-informed industry insider.



## 04. Manage your time

It typically takes just as much time to seal a \$25,000 deal as it does to sell a \$100,000 deal (or whatever the equivalent is for you). Why not invest your time in getting more of the larger deals? Focus on bigger fish in your sales and prospecting efforts.



# 05. Create your virtual advantage

When you're selling virtually, every element of the interaction contributes to or detracts from the buyer's experience. This means you must carefully orchestrate the entire experience from selling to technology.

Using visuals, audio, and content—such as video, screen shares, screen annotation, and virtual whiteboards—creates an engaging experience for buyers and helps you gain a virtual advantage over other sellers.

When prospecting virtually, think about:

- **Video:** Turn your video on. Even if the buyer doesn't have their video on, it's easier for them to feel a connection with you when they can see you.
- **Lighting:** Reduce shadows on your face using purpose-built ring lights and be aware of lighting changes from windows during the day.
- **Sound:** Get a high-quality microphone, test your sound, turn off notifications, and remember to unmute.



# 06. Make time for rapport

Establishing a natural flow and space for conversation will help you build personal connections in person and virtually. Start with the basics: say hello, make eye contact, and break the ice with small talk. If you're meeting with multiple people, fill time with conversation while you wait for others to show up.

Unless you can tell the buyer wants to jump into business with military precision, do what you can to build rapport early in your time together.

[Learn more about building rapport in sales.](#) →





## 07. Offer value from the start

No one wants to hear your capability pitch, your history, or your life story right off the bat. They're looking to find out how their lives can be enriched by working with you. So give them something of value—information, industry insight, expertise, or something else they can use—in your very first meeting.

Eventually you'll sell your company, your offering, and yourself. At first, sell the idea that their *time* will be well-spent if they elect to speak with you.



## 08. Answer the “why?” questions

In your communications and conversations, “*why?*” questions are circling around your buyers’ minds. Specifically there are four whys you need to answer for buyers:

- **Why act?** Why do I need your product or service?
- **Why now?** Why should I stop what I am doing to listen to you?
- **Why us?** Why is your product or service better than the competition?
- **Why trust?** Why should I believe you?

By being proactive and addressing these four whys, you build a strong value proposition for why they should buy...now...from you.



# 09. Ask the right questions

Use a mix of broad open-ended, specific open-ended, and specific closed-ended questions. You may already know what you need to know, but asking open-ended questions can reveal opportunities you and the buyer didn't know existed. Plus, the questions you ask can help you demonstrate your knowledge of the buyer's industry, company, or issue.

If possible, ask questions ahead of meetings, via email or survey. This will get buyers thinking about their needs and equip you with information to dig deeper in your meetings.

Ask both afflictions-based questions (pain) and future seeking, aspirational questions about hopes, goals, and objectives. This will allow you to uncover the broadest set of buyer needs.





# 10. Be an active listener

In recent **research**, only 26% of buyers report sellers are effective listeners. Yet, buyers say this is one of the top factors influencing their purchase decisions.

Practice active listening by restating, inquiring further, and acknowledging the implications of what the buyer says.

You don't have to wait for a sales call to do this. Practice active listening in your next meeting with a colleague or even over dinner with family or friends. Active listening helps building connections and trust, as well as identifying and solving problems.





# 11. Make the right offer

Ultimately, your offer might be a particular type of software, technical instrument, building materials, financial product, operations plan, or marketing plan. But the interim offers—the offers you make, and they accept, *before* they buy from you—must be crafted with the utmost care.



## 12. Plan and secure your next step

Never leave a meeting or a conversation without a solid next step that's been agreed upon. Otherwise, you risk the buyer going silent and not returning your calls or emails. Instead, schedule the next step on the spot.

If the next step is to send a proposal, let them know you'll put a proposal together, but you need to schedule a time during which you can walk them through it. When a buyer makes a commitment on the spot (putting the next meeting on their calendar), they're much more likely to follow through.



## 13. Avoid gimmicks

Always opt for a high-integrity approach. There's no need to use tricks, bend the truth, or cut corners to generate an initial conversation or close the sale. Doing so will kill trust, which is essential for sales success. Don't do anything you wouldn't feel comfortable telling your children when you tuck them in bed at night.

## 14. Keep trying

It takes more attempts than most people think to get through to top prospects. Sometimes you need to reach out seven, eight, nine, or more times to get through to someone. That number goes up and down across different industries and when you reach out to different titles.

One thing is true: it takes more attempts to get through to your buyers than you think.





# 15. Test different approaches

You may need to try different forms of outreach to get through to prospects. In our research, 82% of buyers reported accepting meetings with sellers who proactively reach out to them. **Cold calling** can work well alone, but when combined with mail (yes, we're talking snail mail here), email, and LinkedIn, your success rate typically increases.

Use a variety of touches to reach out to and warm up your prospects—and make sure each touch has value in and of itself.



Download our guide, *5 Sales Prospecting Myths Debunked*.

[DOWNLOAD NOW](#)





# 16. Connect digitally

Strike up a conversation with buyers via email, LinkedIn, text, or other messaging media. React to or comment on their public social media posts. If you notice they belong to an industry group, consider joining yourself—you might make even more contacts.

Building rapport virtually can be challenging.

[Here are 20 Virtual Sales Relationship-Building Tips.](#) →



# 17. Keep prospecting

You've heard the ABCs of selling: Always Be Closing. But just as important is ABP: Always Be Prospecting. The best way to get over a lost sale is to move onto the next sale in your pipeline. If your pipeline is empty, it's much more difficult to recover. Top performers are always working to fill the front end of their pipelines by creating new conversations every day.

[For prospecting tips, read 6 Keys to Prospecting Success.](#) →



# RAIN Sales Prospecting: Create Conversations with Ideas and Insights

Nothing has changed more in sales in the last decade than prospecting. It's more difficult than ever to get through and set meetings with your buyers. If you want your team to achieve top performance in sales prospecting, this is the program for you.

RAIN Sales Prospecting is designed to balance learning and application so your sellers aren't out of the field too long, plus it's contextualized for your business and the sales situations your sellers regularly face so it's immediately applicable on-the-job.

Your team will:

- Apply learning in real-time to connect with prospects and set meetings
- Develop attraction campaigns that we work with you to develop for phone, mail, email and social media
- Have access to cases, examples, and exercises tailored to your industry and your buyer profiles

[Click here to request a complimentary consultation →](#)



## RAIN Group Delivers World-Class Sales Training

- Modular, multi-modal, and purpose-built for the **modern learner**.
- Unique approach to driving **behavior change** through training that we call Execution Assurance.
- Focused on driving the **business results** important to you.
- A **transformational experience** that ensures the development, adoption, and implementation of new skills.
- Action-oriented **coaching** prepares sellers for real situations and provides direct feedback.

# RAIN Group Unleashes Sales Potential

We help organizations:

- Enhance sales capability with award-winning sales training
- Design and execute strategic account management initiatives
- Increase effectiveness of sales management and coaching

**Best IP:** We study buying and selling relentlessly through the RAIN Group Center for Sales Research. Our research and field work allows us to create industry-leading intellectual property to help our clients achieve the greatest success.

**Best Education System:** We use the best education approaches, methods, and technologies to make training work, stick, and transfer to the job.

**Best Results:** We make it our mission to drive value and achieve the highest client satisfaction through excellence in quality and producing transformational results for our clients.



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