

10 (relatively) Easy Ways to Kickstart Your Staffing Sales



TALLANN RESOURCES



At Tallann Resources, we've spoken with hundreds of staffing companies about their sales approaches. From these conversations, we've identified a few common trends in the industry:

- The majority of staffing companies do not have a systematic approach or strategy for their sales efforts
- Most staffing companies rely heavily, if not exclusively, on cold calling for sales
- When staffing sales reps network, they typically do so ineffectively

So what does this mean to you as a staffing firm owner, executive, or sales rep? It means there is tremendous opportunity to outperform your competition by simply creating and executing a sales strategy, broadening your sales activities beyond cold calling, and improving your networking skills. In this whitepaper, we're going to show you how to do just that – and it's much easier than you think.

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But before we do that, let's first talk about what sales really is. Sales is quite simply:

- Identifying your prospects
- Introducing your service to the prospect and generating interest
- Showing the prospect that your service is a better option than they currently have
- Helping the prospect move from the realization that your service is the right choice to actually making the change

Unfortunately when you talk with most sales people and their managers, sales is usually equated to the act of cold calling. Why is that? Well, for a variety of reasons.

One, for generations cold calling was the only option sales people had. Prior to the phone, people had to go door to door because it was the only way to proactively sell their products or services. Once the phone became commonplace in business, most cold calling moved from in person to phone calls, and later on email. However, as technology has evolved and the methods for connecting with prospects has exponentially increased, the staffing industry has remained relatively unchanged in its approach to sales activities.

The second reason why cold calling is so prevalent is that sales managers still use it as the primary measurement for sales activity. This is done partly because it's the only activity they know, but also because it is relatively easy to track. We can track the number of phone calls a sales rep makes a week and identify some correlation to results. It is much harder to track the progress of a sales rep that is focused on networking, social media, webinars, and other activities

that are in many cases more productive but harder to quantify.

So why should we get away from cold calling as our primary sales activity? Well for one thing, it is getting harder and harder to actually reach a live person. The telesales company Connect And Sell did an analysis of millions of cold calls and found the average connect rate was **4.5%**. That means that only **one out of 22 dials** results in a discussion with a live person. Do you really want to pay a sales rep to leave a voice mail 21 out of every 22 calls? We believe there are a multitude of activities that are more effective for your sales team to be focused on.

Step #1: Network!

Everybody says that they do it, but the reality is that very few people really invest sufficient time and effort to not only networking, but doing it effectively. A study conducted at Spherion showed that opportunities generated by networking were **four times as likely** to close as those done by cold call, and the average annual revenue was **six times** greater.

The easiest way to truly integrate networking into your sales strategy is to first identify where your prospects network, and then set weekly goals for networking just as you most likely do for phone calls and appointments. It's not unreasonable to expect a sales rep to attend 2 to 3 networking events a week.



Frozen Calling

Only 1 out of 22 cold calls is answered by a live person

Step #2: Volunteer

Just showing up and passing out some business cards is not enough. Most sales people stop networking because they don't see any results. The problem isn't with networking, but rather the approach. Showing up to the occasional networking event won't yield the results you are looking for. The real key is getting involved on a volunteer level. This is how you truly build relationships, differentiate yourself, and build your reputation. When I was president of the Columbus HR association, we had over 1200 members. An analysis of our memberships' involvement revealed a shocking statistic: out of those 1200 members, only 40 had done any type of volunteer work for the association in the previous year. That means that a little over 3% of our members did anything

more than pay their dues and show up for the occasional event!

It's easy to volunteer – I have yet to be involved in an organization that wasn't dying for help. Just reach out to the president or executive director of the association and let them know you'd like to get involved. Look for high-profile opportunities to volunteer such as working the registration booth at events, or being on committees where you can interact with the maximum number of potential prospects. Get some volunteering under your belt, and then work to be on the board – that's where the real recognition and networking kicks in – and pays off.

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Step#3: LinkedIn Ads

When it comes to targeted advertising, few mediums do a better job than LinkedIn Ads. These are the ads you see whenever you get on LinkedIn, typically on the right hand side, top, or bottom of the page.

There are several advantages to using LinkedIn Ads. First, they can be relatively inexpensive depending on your target audience, and you have full control over the amount you spend. LinkedIn ads are what is known as “pay-per-click” advertising, which means you only get charged when your targeted prospect clicks on your ad. You set a maximize price you want to pay per click, known as a “bid”. Your bid competes with others that are targeting the same audience you are – if your bid is greater than the others your ad will appear when that target logs in to LinkedIn.

Winning bids can range from as low to \$1.00 up to \$100 or more per click for the most in demand targets. Most range in the \$2-5 range. You have the ability to set a daily budget, which helps you control your spend and quickly react to a campaign not getting the results you are wanting.

Another advantage to LinkedIn ads is that you are not charged for “impressions”, which are how many times your ad shows up on a page that a target visits. This means that an ad can show up in front of the same target dozens or even hundreds of times without incurring a cost. Over time this

creates free brand recognition that can have a profound impact on your sales.

LinkedIn Ads also give you the ability to run multiple ads concurrently, and to link the ad to your website, your LinkedIn profile, or a specific landing page. This allows you to try out different approaches to see what yields the best results.

Step #4: Run a “Touch” Program

If you are targeting specific companies in your pipeline, a “touch” program may be an effective tool for you. Touch programs are essentially a marketing campaign carried out over consecutive days or weeks to provide maximum visibility to your prospect. These programs are typically themed and each stage builds off of each other. For example, a touch program might have a circus theme that is carried out once a week for six weeks, with the final stage of the campaign tying everything together and asking for an appointment.

Each stage of the campaign should have an inexpensive item along with a clever marketing piece. Using the circus theme example, one might have a small elephant figurine with a card stating “you never forget that last bad hire”.

Touch programs can be structured as drop-offs or mailings depending on factors such geographic proximity of prospects, market serviced, and what level or position you are targeting.

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A well-planned, professional, creative, and ideally funny touch program can yield an appointment rate of 70% or higher and a close rate as high as 30 or 40%. The return on investment is typically very high for these types of campaigns.

Step #5: Leverage your LinkedIn Contacts

So you've reached the 500+ connections plateau on LinkedIn – now what? Most sales people don't truly know how to leverage their LinkedIn network once they've developed it. But there are a couple ways that you can reap the rewards of your hard work.

First, move your prospecting to focus on 2nd level connections. If you've amassed a network of at least 500 connections, and they aren't just random people that you don't know, you have likely created a powerful prospecting tool. Your first step in prospecting is to identify any and all prospects that are 2nd level connections to you on LinkedIn. This means that you know someone in your network that is also in your prospect's network.

Next, identify who is your contact that is connected to your prospect. If you have multiple mutual connections, determine which one you know the best and is most likely to make an introduction for you.

Third, call your contact and ask for an introduction. Don't use the introduction email provided in LinkedIn. Your success rate will be significantly higher calling your contact and asking for a referral. The referral should be in the form of an email introduction copying you, explaining who you are and why they feel the two of you

should be introduced.

If you know your contact well, and they know your prospect well, your chances of at least an introductory phone conversation are exponentially higher than if you cold called that same person.

Step #6: Host an Executive Breakfast

Prospects hate being sold, but they love to learn (and get a free meal). This is especially true if you are targeting human resources or other professionals that need ongoing certification credits. Hosting an executive breakfast, lunch and learn, or other similar events is a highly effective way of getting in front of your prospects. A couple tips on setting up your first educational event:

- Have a local consultant conduct the session. They will most likely do it for free to get the exposure, and may even bring some of their own prospects or clients to the event
- Breakfasts tend to result in less no shows. Get your prospects before they go to the office, minimizing the chance that something more urgent comes up
- Obtain pre-approved certification credits. This is a huge selling point for many professionals
- Don't sell. This is the time to be building credibility and relationships, not pitching your services to a trapped audience. Save the sales pitch for the follow up meeting you will be scheduling after the event

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Step #7: Revisit Snail Mail

While your competition is cold calling and emailing your prospects, traditional mail has become somewhat of a novelty. Mailings followed by phone calls have shown to be substantially more effective than phone calls or emails alone.

The primary goal of a mailing is to get your prospect to open it. Here are a few simple but effective ways to give your mailing the best chance for viewing:

- Handwrite the address. One of the quickest ways to get your mailing opened is for it to look like a personal letter
- Use unique stamps. Don't want to look like junk mail? Then stay away from meters or generic flag stamps. The more interesting the better. Want to really catch their attention? Use winter holiday stamps in the summer.

Step #8: Win a "Best Of" Award

What does being a best employer or best staffing company award have to do with sales? Quite a bit actually. Winning staffing companies yield a variety of benefits, including improved employee retention and morale, great media exposure, increased credibility with clients and prospects, and a competitive differentiator that really resonates with prospects – especially HR.

There are a couple of industry awards that you can apply for. The first is the American Staffing Association's Best of Staffing Client and Talent awards. Both are conducted by Inavero, with the Client survey focusing on service delivery and the Talent side focusing on the staffing firm as an employer of choice.

Registration closes in October and can be accessed at bestofstaffing.com.

The other industry survey is Staffing Industry Analysts' Best Staffing Firms to Work For. This study is conducted by Quantum Workplace and focuses on internal employees. Winners are announced in February of each year and more details can be found at staffingindustry.com.

Even if you don't win, participating in one of these studies is immensely valuable, as it gives you a benchmark to work towards improving. On the client side, you can see how you stack up to your competitors and determine a plan for improvement. This step may not yield immediate results, but it just might have the most significant long-term benefit for your firm.

Step#9: Let your Clients Brag for You

We all know we should use testimonials more, but most staffing firms don't on a regular basis. Think about it – who is the most compelling and convincing person to sell your services? Is it the owner or executive of your company? Is it your sales people? Of course not – we all have a heavily vested interest in companies buying our staffing services. Obviously that doesn't make us the most credible person for a brand new prospect to believe.

The person with the most credibility in the eyes of your prospect is an existing customer that is thrilled to be working with you. Even better if they are in the same

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industry with similar needs and challenges.

So what's the best way to get testimonials, and what do you do with them once you have them? First, realize that the days of testimonial letters are gone. No one will write them, no one reads them, and frankly you don't need them. Instead, here is what you should request from your best, and most loyal clients:

- Two sentences in an email talking about how great you are. If you have a differentiator you want to highlight, ask them to speak specifically about it
- Ask to use their name, title, and company. Anonymous testimonials don't carry nearly the same amount of credibility, and we advise against using them at all.
- Ask if you can use their photo. A headshot along with their testimonial shoots credibility through the roof. Now your prospects can see there is an actual person behind the quote. If they don't have a headshot, use their LinkedIn photo or offer to take a photo

Once you have your testimonials, use them liberally. They should be on your website, brochures, presentations, proposals – anything that could end up in front of your prospects. Create a “What our Clients are Saying” handout with a list of testimonials. If you have enough, consider multiple testimonial sheets split up by industry. If your prospects won't believe you, they will believe your clients.

Step #10: Make a YouTube video

YouTube is now the second largest search engine in the world behind Google (which not so coincidentally owns YouTube). People are almost as likely to go look for an answer in a video as they are reading a website. More and more staffing firms are having success in engaging clients, prospects, and candidates through video.

The first step is to create a company profile on YouTube. This is done through creating a new Gmail account specifically for your staffing firm. Don't use your personal account, as your personal subscriptions and favorites will show up in your activity posts.

Once you've created a new account, then you will want to create a channel. This is the equivalent of a Facebook fan page or LinkedIn company page, where you can customize it with your logo and images.

Third, you need to create and post content. Think first about whom you want to attract to the channel – clients, prospects, candidates, or all of the above? Then think about what type of content would attract your target audience. For candidates it might be simple interviewing or resume tips. For clients and prospects maybe its how do you retain good employees, interviewing questions to ask, or how to get the most out of your staffing provider. For examples of what other staffing companies have done, just do a search on YouTube for “Staffing Company”.

As you will see, you don't need a flashy, professionally produced video to get results. You can use a simple webcam, or post a presentation with audio added. In many

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cases low-tech is preferred by viewers, as they tend to look at it as less of a commercial and more informational. Whatever you choose, the key is to provide quality content that your prospects are looking for.

In Closing

These are just 10 ideas to help kickstart your sales. As you can see, there are no silver bullets. Growing your staffing business requires a multi-pronged approach that builds brand awareness, credibility, a strong value proposition, and ultimately a demand for your service.

By executing a well thought out plan that includes many or all of the steps listed in this paper, you will be well on your way to differentiating your company and creating a sustainable competitive advantage.

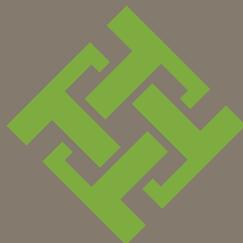
About the Author

With a career spanning nearly 20 years, Tom Erb has established himself as one of the staffing and recruiting industry's top subject matter experts. As an executive for two of the largest staffing and recruiting companies in the world, Tom worked with some of the most recognizable and well-respected companies in the United States to help optimize their workforce strategy.



As one of the top national speakers in the staffing industry, Tom has presented to a variety of organizations including the American Staffing Association, National Association of Personnel Services, TechServe Alliance, and the New York Staffing Association.

A variety of national and regional media outlets including The Wall Street Journal, Monster.com, and Columbus have interviewed Tom. His article on negotiating skills was published in ASA's Staffing Success magazine in April 2012. In 2012, HR Examiner named Tom one of the Top 25 Online Influencers in Staffing.



About Tallann Resources

Tallann Resources provides consulting, training, and coaching to the staffing and recruiting industry. With nearly 20 years of experience in the field, our team of industry veterans has helped firms of all sizes and types grow their business through sales and recruitment strategy,

employee training and development, operational efficiencies.

To learn more about how Tallann Resources might be able to help your staffing or recruiting firm, please contact us at 614-372-5888 or info@tallannresources.com.