

# Seeking Success in Sales? Prospect Your Way to Millions

by Paul J. Meyer

I asked all of the successful salespeople I knew one question: "After you set your goal to succeed in selling, what is the single most important quality you can develop?" They all gave me the same answer: "Prospecting." *What is prospecting?* It's finding potential customers.

Actually, it makes little difference what you're selling. Your success in sales will ultimately depend on your ability to prospect. The more you know about these prospects and the more qualified prospects you develop, the higher your closing average will be.

**Prospecting methods.** In many ways, prospecting can be likened to the hub of a wheel. Each spoke in the wheel reaches the hub at a different point, and so it is with prospecting. There are six basic prospecting methods.

1. Cold canvas
2. Observation
3. Chain of referrals
4. Old customers
5. Nests
6. Centers of influence

This last method, *centers of influence*, is what I attribute most of my success to. In effect, this person uses his or her influence with others to help you, possibly even making appointments for you with people he or she knows. The easiest way to gain an interview with someone is to be sent to him by someone he respects.

In some cases, a referral is all you need to make a sale. This prospecting method can even seem magical. *The possibilities are infinite with a center of influence.* Someone who is a center of influence generally gives you help over a long period of time and often participates in making the sale, or providing third-party support.

## Your potential prospects

Begin to school yourself in the idea that everyone is a potential prospect. You'll be amazed at how you begin to look at people differently when you realize that everyone you know or come into contact with is a potential sales prospect.

When you first start out prospecting, begin at your home base. With the help of your family and close friends, list the names and contact information of everyone you each know. Don't try to filter out who may or may not be interested in your product during this initial phase. Simply make a list of everyone you can think of.

Transfer these names to index cards or a spreadsheet. Next, write down any extra information you know about them, such as where they are employed, their hobbies, interests, and any affiliations they may have.

## Rate your prospects

After you write down everything you can think of about them, rate each one in terms of whether you think they are a poor, fair, good, or excellent prospect.

Would they be interested in your product? Do they have enough income to afford your product? Do they know other people who should be added to your prospect list? The more you know, the greater the odds for a successful sale. Rating will help you know how to prioritize your existing contacts.

## Work your list

Learn to observe everyone carefully, and begin working your list. Make phone calls, set up interviews, work your sales, and always look for new prospects to add to your list. Remember, everyone is a prospective customer. Ask each prospect and customer for referrals, being sure to ask for as much information as possible.

If you have a physician or other specialized professional as a customer, try nest prospecting. For instance, one physician can introduce you to at least a dozen more. One small business owner could introduce you to all the others in that same development or niche.

## Always ask for referrals

Not to ask for referrals is simply a lost opportunity. Take referrals one step further by being sure to report back to the person who referred you. If his or her influence was strong, you may have just found yourself another center of influence.

Communicate your appreciation, and be on the lookout for ways that you can help those who help you too. Referrals are a two-way street.

With perseverance and steady effort, you can become a master prospector. Word of mouth advertising is powerful. Satisfied customers are a valuable commodity and can be your key to prospecting your way to prosperity!

*"Your success in sales will ultimately depend on your ability to prospect."*

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Paul J. Meyer may be a *New York Times* best-selling author and millionaire many times over, but he began his sales career learning how to prospect like every other successful salesperson. To learn more about how to prospect, order Paul's very practical CD, *How to Prospect Your Way to Millions* today, available at [www.pauljmeyer.com](http://www.pauljmeyer.com) or Amazon.com.

