

First Edition

Freelancer's Guide



NEW

to Finding Clients

How to find your best freelancing clients via cold calls, warm calls, and e-mails. Includes phone scripts, e-mail templates, and a progress tracker that you can put to work right away!

by **Martha Retallick**

freelance graphic designer
and photographer

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INTRODUCTION

Did you know that many, if not most, books about prospecting are written for full-time salespeople?

This one isn't. Rather, it's for people who make a living from their creativity. So, if you're a freelance graphic designer, writer, photographer, programmer, or similar, read on.

This book is about being proactive. It's about finding clients instead of waiting for them to come to you.

In the following pages, I'm going to show you an outreach system that consists of processes, templates, software, and scripts that you can use as-is. Or you can use my system as the basis for creating your own. It's up to you.

This book is also the first in a series of *Freelancer's Guides*. Despite the fact that they're about a serious topic – growing your business – I'll use a light touch, one that I hope you will enjoy.

In addition to cold-calling people who've never heard of you, this book covers:

1. Warm calling and e-mails to people with whom you've had some previous connection.
2. Follow-up calls and e-mails to people you've just contacted.
3. Keep-in-touch calling and e-mails to people you contacted a while ago.
4. Market research calls and e-mails.
5. Outreach via cold, warm, follow-up, and keep-in-touch e-mails.

Now, without further comment, let's find some hot prospects for your freelancing business!

WHY SHOULD YOU BE COLD CALLING?

Because there's business to be had out there! Matter of fact, I've found my most profitable clients via cold calls. And I'm not the only one. Many freelancers report similar experiences.

In addition to the business possibilities, you need to get your name out there. The simple truth is that you're a smart, talented freelancer. And more people need to know just how good you are. One of the easiest and fastest ways to tell them is to pick up the phone and start introducing yourself.

Don't worry – no one's going to reach through the receiver and bite you. If anything, you'll be pleasantly surprised by how nice people are.

But, you say, cold calling has such a *bad* reputation!

Sorry to say, but that reputation is deserved.

Before we go any further, let's consider those pesky people who are also working the phones, starting with those telemarketers who call households between 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. They know you'll be home. And that you're probably trying to enjoy a meal with your family. The fact that they're interrupting just doesn't seem to register.

While some of these dinner-interrupting calls may be from legitimate organizations, more than a few are from scammers. Just keep an eye on your caller ID for a few days, and try this experiment:

While the phone is ringing, enter the number on your caller ID screen into your favorite search engine. If the call is from a scammer, the search results will point to consumer protection websites like:

<http://800notes.com>

<http://www.callferret.com>

<http://www.callwiki.com>

<http://www.numberinvestigator.com>

<http://whocallsme.com>

In just a few days of watching my own caller ID, then checking the numbers on the just-mentioned websites, I found that I was contacted by scammers offering:

1. **Free government grants.** Ever applied for a government grant? I do business with university faculty members who have. Every one of them says that Uncle Sam is a pretty tough guy. He doesn't hand out grants like Halloween candy.
2. **Help with tax problems.** If you find yourself in this unfortunate situation, you're better off dealing with a tax accountant or attorney you already know, not some stranger calling on the phone.
3. **Health insurance.** One of my most frequent callers is an outfit that has the same initials as a large U.S. government agency. And this particular agency is not in the business of selling any kind of insurance.
4. **Fabulous opportunities to change telephone companies.** If you take one of these calls, be very careful what you say. Many people report that their phone service was changed without their consent. You'll sometimes hear this practice referred to as "slamming." [And, yes, it is illegal for U.S. telephone companies to do this.](#)
5. **Lower interest rates on credit cards.**

In addition to the scams listed above, have you ever gotten those calls that are nothing more than a series of fax tones? Annoying, aren't they?

Or how about those phone messages in which the caller just leaves a first name and nothing more? Thinking that it's from someone you know, you dutifully return the call, only to find that your call goes to a business, and then the person on the other end launches into a sales pitch. To which I say, "Why can't they leave a proper business message, which includes the first and last name and the company name?" There's no need to use deception on a business call.

Tip: Spend a few minutes at those consumer protection websites, and you'll find that the same phone numbers keep cropping up. That's because scammers keep changing their pitch – last month it was health insurance, this month it's lowering credit card interest rates, and who knows what it will be next month?

"Do Not Call" and You

With all of this bad behavior, it's no surprise that the United States Federal Trade Commission's Do Not Call Registry was created. To add your home or mobile phone number, go to:

<https://www.donotcall.gov>

Please note that there are several Do Not Call exemptions, and one of them applies to you. Here they are:

1. Charitable organizations
2. Politicians
3. Political parties
4. Survey takers
5. Business-to-business sales and marketing. This is where you, the freelancer, fit in. If you're making prospecting calls to non-consumer entities like businesses, government agencies, and educational institutions, you're exempt.

Please note that the B2B exemption doesn't mean you can act like one of those pitch-switching scammers or the high-pressure salespeople who refuse to take "No" for an answer. You know those people – you tell them "No" and they treat it as an objection that must be overcome as they roll down the road to the Closed Sale.

Unlike the scammers and high-pressure folks, we're not trying to close the sale on the first call. Rather, we're calling to introduce our services, and, if the person on the other end sounds interested, we may set up an appointment. I say "may" because many of us are able to do business without ever meeting our clients face to face.

The Four Flavors of "No"

Before we go any further, I want to say something about that dreaded word, "No." In the world of a cold and warm caller, "No" is a *wonderful* word. Matter of fact, there are days when I look at my phone and say, "It's time to get some 'No's.'" And I'll set a "No" quota and keep calling until I reach it.

Why have I become so friendly with the word "No?" Because it comes in four flavors. Let's sample them:

1. **No way, go away!** Might as well get the harshest, bitterest taste out of the way first. This is the "No" that is sometimes delivered with a hostile tone. As in, you'd be a fool to ever contact this person again.

But, speaking from my experience, which has been gained through making thousands of cold calls, the hostile "No" people are few and far between. You're much more likely to get the nicer, "Thanks, But No Thanks" version. Either way, they're not interested. So, it's best to move on.

2. **No, not yet.** This “No” comes from people who don’t have an immediate need for your services. It has a mildly sweet taste, with a hint of better things to come.

The important thing to do with the “Not Yets” is to stay in touch. This book offers many suggestions on how to do this.

3. **You know, I’m just not sure.** This isn’t quite a “No,” and it has a tantalizing taste that makes you want more. The good news is that these people aren’t coming right out and saying “No.” And they sound interested enough that they’ve given you an opportunity to show what you can do.

The best way to do this is to provide examples of work you’ve done for previous clients. So, point them toward your portfolio. And, if your blog or e-mail newsletter focuses on your work, invite them to subscribe. (Better yet, get the subscription started for them. Just be sure to ask permission first.)

What not to do: There are people will ask you to do a project for free, just so they can check you out. And, if they like your work, maybe they’ll hire you for a paying gig. Or they’ll ask you to work for a sizable discount on this project because they’ll make it up to you “down the road.”

The problem with the first scenario is that it falls into the ugly category of speculative work. According to the [NO!SPEC graphic design site](#), “This practice has become popular because many companies erroneously view it as a quick and easy way to get the best ideas from designers. Unfortunately, requesting speculative design is a poor business decision because it caters to the lowest common denominator of design. It also forces designers to engage in the poor design practice of making snap decisions.”

Tip: [Read NO!SPEC’s article on why speculative work hurts.](#)

Our second scenario is based on a promise that’s seldom kept: You’ll eventually be paid at the rate you’ve deserved all along. So, leave those “down the road” promises where they belong: In your mental round file.

4. **Not me, but here’s someone else who may be interested.** This “No” has a strong, sweet taste because it’s the kind that comes with a referral. And, since Person A told you to contact Person B, you’ve moved out of cold call territory. Now you’re making a warm call.

Does this mean that Person B will say yes? Perhaps. It may also mean that Person B will offer one of the three preceding flavors of “No.” But you’ll

never know unless you try. So, pick up that phone, send that e-mail, do what you have to do to get in touch with Person B.

We've reached the end of our Four Flavors of "No" tasting. Permit me to leave you with this dessert:

What may first seem like the dreaded N-O is actually a "yes" in the making. It will take time for you to get there, but stay in touch (without being creepy). In time, and, yes, it will probably take more time that you want it to take, some of those "No" answers will turn into a much tastier word: "Yes."

"I get all of my business through networking and word-of-mouth..."

If you know any hardcore networkers, then you've probably heard their opinions about cold calling. A lot of them look down on it.

And that's too bad, because even the best network can only take you so far. What if you want to get into a new market in a different city? Or a more lucrative market in your current city? Can your network get you there? If it can, more power to you! If not, you're going to have to pick up the phone and ask strangers for their business.

In addition, building your business through networking can take months, if not years. Can you afford to wait that long?

Then there's word-of-mouth marketing. Like networking, this approach can take a long time before it produces results. After all, people are busy. They have lots of things to talk about besides you and your business.

If you are depending on word of mouth to build your business, you're allowing other people to control your fate. Why would you want to do that? It's your business, not theirs. And it's your responsibility to take it where you want to go.

"If you have to cold call, then you aren't very good..."

In 2008, I cold-called the photography editor at a U.S.-based magazine that's distributed internationally. He said, "Usually, the people who cold call me are pretty good." He encouraged me to stay in touch.

I've kept in touch via my e-mail newsletter and periodic pitches for assignments. No work yet, and that's typical for freelance photography. It's a brutally competitive field, and you have to hang in there until you make your first sale. Matter of fact, in mid-2010, I made my first sale to another publication that I'd contacted back in 2008.

LIKE WHAT YOU'VE BEEN READING?

The *Freelancer's Guide to Finding Clients* is written by a freelancer, for freelancers. Here's a bit of info about its author, Martha Retallick.

Born and raised in Pennsylvania, Martha earned an economics degree from the University of Michigan. She has worked in all sorts of jobs since then. We're talking everything from digging ditches to writing press releases, running cash registers to annotating academic books, and repairing bicycles to helping produce a magazine.

When she was in her early twenties, Martha set the goal of bicycling through all 50 of the United States. She accomplished this over a 12-year period, and wrote and published two books about her experiences. You can see where Martha went by visiting her [bicycle](#), [nature](#), and [travel](#) photography portfolios.

Martha carries this diversified background into her [graphic design](#) and [photography](#), which draw on her skills in business, computers, and publishing. She has been active on the Internet and in website development since 1995.

She shares her experiences on the prospecting front in *The Freelancer's Guide to Finding Clients*. [And you can download your own copy for just \\$24.95.](#)