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## Ten Ways To Get Prospects To Return Your Calls

When you review your list of phone calls you have made to prospective clients, you note these initials, or similar codes, that you wrote beside numerous names every month: HCB (He'll call back) and SCB (She'll call back). But do they, without additional prompting from us? Often they do not.

So we wonder, "How can I increase the percentage of prospects who return my initial phone call?" After eight years as an entrepreneur, I have discovered a few strategies that stimulate callbacks. Here are the tips that work best for me, whether I am leaving a voice mail message or talking to the office gatekeeper:

**ONE:** More than once, state the name of a prominent person who referred you. Open the call, not with your own name ("Hi, I'm Bill Lampton"), but with the referring party's name: "Harley Smith suggested that you might be interested in hearing about my services." Then close with, "As I said earlier, our mutual friend Harley Smith prompted me to call you."

**TWO:** Mention a specific point you want to talk with them about. "I'll appreciate the chance to hear your feedback about the bid I sent you last week."

**THREE:** Mention how the call will benefit them. "When you return my call, I will explain how my services can improve your company's employee morale and customer service at the same time."

**FOUR:** Suggest a specific date/time: "I will be in my office tomorrow morning between 9:00 and 12:00, and I hope you get an opportunity to call me then." This suggests that a returned call in that span won't initiate long-term telephone tag.

**FIVE:** Give the recipient the privilege of setting the preferred date/time: "I'm going to give you my E-mail address now. Will you please send me a short message, mentioning what day and time are convenient for us to talk? I will keep my line clear for your return call then."

**SIX:** Promise to keep the return call brief: “When you return my call, I promise to take no more than three minutes of your time. You can hang up if I’m not finished by then.”

**SEVEN:** Confine your message to three or four sentences, even with a receptionist. If the executive assistant or voice mail message identifies you as longwinded, you are less likely to get called back.

**EIGHT:** Say something that connects you with their organization: “I know your company quite well, because I did an internship there during my years at the university.”

**NINE:** Give your phone number at the start of your message and again at the end. If the person missed jotting it down the first time, she has a second chance without replaying the message.

**TEN:** Say, "In case it's better for you to return the call after hours, here is my cell phone number." This doubles your access, and indicates you give service beyond closing time.

Having shared these tips, I will ask whether you are enjoying return-call success using strategies I haven’t mentioned. If so, please share them with me by E-mail. Like you, I remain open to any legitimate approach that strengthens my business.

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