

## Hard-to-Reach Prospects—7 Steps to Find and Sell Them

High-value prospects are hard-to-find and hard-to-reach. You've invested in advertising or marketing, hired an SEO consultant, designed a new website, attended trades shows, and hired more sales people. Every now and then, you actually do find a high-value prospect that turns into a great, long-term customer. "Every now and then," that's the problem.

- Disheartening -

You have great products and services. You know you could help many more customers. You'd like to grow your business with the right customers, but can't find them. Even when you find them, they don't seem to understand how much you can help.

- Frustrating -

Why is it so hard to find high-value prospects? And why is getting high-value prospects so hit or miss?

- Demoralizing -

There's hope. Imagine what it would be like to:

- Precisely know your ideal prospect.
- Find the people who will be your best customers and could even be the easiest to sell.
- Have a reliable way to connect with high-value prospects and get a response.
- Know your pipeline is filled with high-quality prospects.
- Know you will meet your sales goals.

### Been There

About fifteen years ago, I was leading a software business just before the Internet boom. We had great products and were way ahead of our competitors. Our positioning and timing were perfect.

Still, we failed to capitalize on the opportunity. Why? I never created a reliable system to find and connect with high-value prospects. I tried hiring marketing agencies, hiring more salespeople, the latest marketing tricks—nothing worked. I had engineering degrees and an MBA, but none of that helped.

We had a specialty product that solved a problem for large companies. Our target was a hard-to-reach decision maker, protected by layers of gatekeepers.

Engineering was good. The sales team was good. Operations were good. Customer Support was good and customers were happy. Our products and technology were way ahead of their time. The only thing that was really missing was a reliable marketing and prospecting system that would work get us in front of prospects.

Disheartened. Frustrated. Demoralized. I gave up and left the business.

I said, “Never Again!” I went to work and learned how to build a systematic flow of the right prospects. It was harder than I had expected. That’s why it’s so unusual to find anyone who really knows what to do.

... one of the most  
worthwhile and rewarding  
investments you can make.

I’m going to lay it out for you, and the key elements are only going to take a few pages. I can’t stand the thought of you going through what I went through—doing all the work to build a great company and not getting the full rewards.

I can’t tell you this will be trivial or easy. It’s not!

I can tell you creating a predictable prospecting system for high-value targets will be one of the most worthwhile and rewarding investments you can make. It’s strategic work, and you can see progress as quickly as 2-3 months. How much time and work depends on what you already have and already know.

I’ll get you started in the following pages, and explain what you need to create. Plus, if you want help, I’ll give you some options.

## **What Keeps Companies from Finding and Engaging High-Value, Hard-to-Reach Prospects?**

To understand what will have you find and engage hard-to-reach prospects, it helps to know what causes “prospect problems.”

### **Failure to Focus**

Too many times I hear, “Anyone can use our product or service.” This may be partly true. The better question is, “Which prospects are the great ones that will turn into loyal, profitable customers.”

Few companies have done the work to know their top prospects and truly understand their mindset. The result is ineffective marketing that prevents finding high-value, hard-to-reach prospects.

Why would top prospects bother to listen when you haven’t done the work to understand their specific company and exact situation?

## Underground Prospects

Top prospects can be hidden underground, protected by layers of gatekeepers or corporate walls. This situation is common for executive decision makers. They are busy and don't want to be bothered—unless you have something valuable to share.

Another type of underground prospect is the anonymous technical influencer. Engineers, scientists, and other specialists may not be that visible. They aren't really protected by gatekeepers, but can still be hard-to-reach.

## Too Many Leads

That's right, too many leads. Poor quality customers hurt you. Poor quality prospects hurt even more.

An example is companies that sell to vertical markets. Perhaps you sell widgets to law firms. But, prospects only search on the Internet for non-specific terms like "widgets."

**Too many leads** can reduce your sales team's productivity

If you optimize your website for "widget" traffic or buy "widget" traffic, nearly all the visitors are ***NOT*** from law firms. You end up squandering valuable Account Executive time trying to chase down and qualify large numbers of people who will never buy from you.

It's far better to have 10 high-value, qualified leads, than 100 "sort of" leads.

## Marketing Miscalculation

Marketing has become much more complex, and it's easy to fall into the trap of trying an expensive strategy that has no chance to work.

Online marketing can be a great way to connect with prospects. Sometimes.

After I explain the next example, you'll think, "Well, that's obvious." But, I can tell you; I have repeatedly had to convince clients to stop doing something that could not possibly work.

Here's the example. We do a lot of work for technology companies, and some of them have very specialized and expensive technical products. Their buyers would rarely think to search for their products on the web. The fact that these particular buyers don't search is not my opinion—it's a fact backed up with data straight from Google.

Still, the CEO thinks their products should rank on the first page of Google. It can take a significant marketing effort to rank on the first page of Google. Why waste the

effort if buyers don't search that way? There's no chance this strategy will do anything except let the CEO brag about their Google search ranking.

Meet your buyers on their terms. Find them where they are, not where you want them to be!

### **Over-reliance on outdated sales and marketing ideas**

Want to grow sales?

Just hire some more salespeople. Right. How often does this work?

Or, double the advertising budget. Perhaps you'll get more inquiries, but are any of them high-value prospects? Do they turn into customers?

Know what your buyers want, and help them solve their problems.

Now, I'm not against salespeople or advertising. In fact both of these have a place in your process. In isolation, though, these strategies often don't get the results you want.

It gets worse. Buyers keep changing their behavior.

Cold calling used to be an effective strategy. But, who answers the phone anymore? Most people have caller ID and it's very easy to avoid unexpected calls.

In fact many marketing and sales strategies that worked well a few years ago are mostly a waste of time and money today. When was the last time you looked for a provider in the Yellow Pages?

Know what your buyers want, and help them solve their problems. Use targeted activities to get results.

### **Strategy Strangulation**

Worse than using outdated strategies is chasing every new idea that comes along.

Companies often end up dabbling in too many ideas. Many of the strategies might work if they were properly implemented, but this requires experimentation and expertise. The answer is to choose one or two high-potential strategies and master their implementation.

As I write this, Vine is a hot topic in social media. It lets you post 6-second looping videos. Cool. By the time you read this, Vine may be out of business or obliterated by something else.

Make the right choices for your business, and don't waste your time chasing crazy new strategies.

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## 7 Steps to Find and Sell Hard-to-Reach, Underground Prospects

Below is an overview of the 7 steps that lead to high-valuable prospects. I'll give you specific details for each step and what must happen for success.

1. **Sales Surge Roadmap** – Know your ideal prospect and focus your efforts on finding and converting them into customers.

Organize all you know about your hard-to-find and hard-to-reach prospect into a Precise Prospect Profile. Having the information in an actionable format enhances all your sales and marketing initiatives.

Once you know “who” is your ideal prospect, select “how” to reliably find and engage them.

2. **Distinguished Appearance** - Prospects are more willing to connect with companies that demonstrate expertise and credibility.

Your copy and presentation must ensure you appear to be substantial, credible, and special.

3. **Magnetic Enticing Content** – Studies have shown that 57% of the buying process happens before a prospect is ready to talk with a salesperson. If you miss the first half of the buying process, it may be impossible to catch up.

Create and provide valuable information to attract prospects and have them eager to engage with you on their terms.

4. **Prospect Outreach and Attraction** – Leverage your magnetic content to connect with and attract hard-to-reach prospects.

The best approach depends on your situation. Some of our favorite strategies:

- Inbound Marketing when prospects are looking for and know they want to buy your category of product or service
- Outbound Marketing when prospects don't know about your company or offerings
- LinkedIn and Social Media to combine the best of Inbound and Outbound marketing

5. **Rapport with Hard-to-Reach Prospects** - Nurture high-value prospects until they are ready for a sales appointment.

The timing won't be right for many of your ideal prospects. Once you have found them, stay with them. They'll appreciate you and you'll be one of their top, short-list choices.

6. **Synchronize with Sales** - Have a smooth transition so sales can efficiently create sales appointments.
7. **Boost Results** - Track and report on results. Improve and expand results.

Monitor progress and make appropriate adjustments.

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## 1 Sales Surge Roadmap

You won't get very far until you have a clearly defined, Precise Prospect Profile. Until you do, you'll just waste much of your marketing budget.

- Who is the ideal prospect?
- What problems do they have that you can solve?
- How do they think about their problems?
- How would they describe their situation?
- What steps do prospects go through before they decide to buy?
- Do your prospects search for related information or products on Google or other search engines?
- Do your prospects participate in any online forums or social media?
- Who else sells to the same prospects? Are there potential strategic partners?
- Which trade shows do they attend?
- Is it possible to buy and filter high-quality prospect lists?
- Do you have a deep understanding of each of these topics?

Having a demographic profile helps, but isn't nearly enough.

It's harder than it may initially sound. Part of the challenge can be that you are too close to your company. You can't easily step back and see things as your prospects do. Plus, having real clarity takes work, and it's common for companies to stop short of what's really required.

When we work with clients, it's common to spend the first month or two creating their first Precise Prospect Profile. For smaller companies, one prospect profile is enough. Larger firms may have several. Most companies will do better and be more focused with no more than 3 to 5 target profiles.

Do not try to go forward without a Precise Prospect Profile.

To complete the plan, identify channels and strategies that will work to find ideal prospects. Use the information in the Precise Prospect Profile to identify the best ways to reach ideal prospect. Meet prospects where they are and give them valuable help.

## 2 Distinguished Appearance

There's no point to finding or attracting hard-to-reach prospects if they'll just be disappointed when they meet you. First impressions still matter. And for many buyers, the first impression happens online.

- Does your website clearly explain your products and services in language that connects with your prospect?
- Do your About Us and Contact pages work to attract ideal prospects?
- Do your graphics and logo inspire confidence and credibility?
- Are your social media profiles complete and consistent with the image you need to project to win over your valuable prospects?
- Do you have a blog and are you positioned as a thought leader?

Ultimately, you want to have all of these done. Luckily, you don't need to have them all perfect right away. Still, it's important to be "good enough," or you run the risk of repelling your top prospects.

## 3 Magnetic Enticing Content

Back before the Internet, buyers had to come to salespeople for information. Not anymore!

Today, you can learn about nearly any topic with a quick search on the web (Who doesn't rely on Wikipedia?). Some of what you find may be wrong or misleading. Some may be confusing or disorganized.

You, though, you'll be different. You'll provide clear, valuable information.

The result is that you attract prospects that want to talk with you once they are ready to buy. The sale is much easier because they already see you as a resource and friend. Plus, because you made the effort to really know how they see their situation, they feel like you've been talking personally—just to them.

Many companies think content is just to attract visitors to your website. That's true, but it's for much more. Other ways you can use content include:

- Sales support – Send content to prospects during the sales process to broaden and deepen your appeal without spending scarce salesperson time.
- Email nurture marketing – Keep qualified prospects warm by sending them useful information. They'll think of you when it's time to buy.
- Customer support and delight – Add value by helping existing customers better solve their problems or utilize your capabilities.
- Social media outreach – Companies often misuse social media or think only in terms of their number of connections. Use content to engage and nurture via social media.
- Employee training – Use your content to rapidly onboard new employees.

Content can take many forms. Blog posts, whitepapers, videos, infographics, slide shows, interviews, podcasts, print pieces. These are all forms of content.

Don't over-produce your content. Instead focus on helping prospects start to solve their problem or gain their desired result. It should look professional, but flashy may waste money and may even put off your prospects.

Ask about our interview  
and writing services to  
unlock your valuable  
information.

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Every company has amazing expertise, but it's often trapped inside their busiest, most valuable people.

Once you have great content use it. Have landing pages that encourage prospects to opt in to your emails and get them into your Customer Resource Management (CRM) tool.

# 4

## Prospect Outreach and Attraction

You know your precise prospect profile. You look distinguished when they meet you, and you have something valuable to say (magnetic content). Now you can connect with prospects and fill your funnel with prospects that will predictably become customers.

How will you find your prospects and have them find you?

- Social Media – Especially LinkedIn for Business-to-Business sales
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO)
- Online Advertising (Pay per click and other approaches)
- Offline Advertising
- Purchase lists then use Direct Mail or Email
- Webinars & Events



- Trade Shows & Conferences
- Joint Ventures
- Referral Programs
- Direct Contact

There's no single best answer—it depends on your situation and your target prospects. All of these and many other strategies can work with the right circumstances.

Most companies should pick one or two strategies and execute them well. It's not about doing everything—don't spread yourself too thin and waste your marketing efforts. Do one strategy well. After it's mastered and working well, add another strategy.

If you aren't sure which strategies are best for your situation, call and ask!

800-609-9669

## 5 Rapport with Hard-to-Reach Prospects

In Step 4, we found and connected with valuable, hard-to-reach prospects. That's not enough. We need to build rapport and have them learn how we can help. Some may be ready to buy, but many others may need more time.

Use Multi-touch, Multi-media techniques to ensure the message gets through. Different prospects respond best to different channels, so it's best to use multiple approaches. And, frequency matters. You can't stop after just one touch or two.

- LinkedIn – LinkedIn is a great tool for the initial connection, but is not as good for ongoing engagement and nurturing. The objective is to move them from LinkedIn to each of the other channels below.
- Email – Email continues to be one of the most effective marketing channels assuming that prospects want to hear from you and find your messages worthwhile. Email is often used to send summaries and links to your magnetic content. Or, a complete piece of content can be delivered as an email.
- Phone, voice mail, and text messages – Contact the prospect via telephone technologies. Keep calls short and to the point. Even though people may be harder to reach, telephone contact can still be highly effective.
- Direct Mail – Send letters or packages. Dimensional mail can be especially effective at getting the attention of hard-to-reach prospects. Fedex almost always gets through even when traditional mail does not.

Some of these channels can get expensive. Only use them for high-value prospects that will be ideal for your company. And, don't over-do the frequency. Be clever, creative, and valuable. Make the prospects like you and look forward to hearing from you.

Follow up! Frequency and consistent activity are essential. And keep the quality of your message high. Really care about your prospects and ensure you are delivering value. Be real and be interested in their success. They'll notice the difference.

## **6 Synchronize with Sales**

Sales appointments with highly qualified, ideal prospects are ultimately what you want. It's the result that comes from doing all the other things well.

Unless your sales team has serious problems, you should expect they would close a high percentage of qualified leads.

In many companies there is a lack of trust and communication between sales and marketing. Focusing on a clear target prospect and executing good marketing will create a stream of high-value prospects.

Align Sales & Marketing. Too many salespeople are trained to expect low quality leads from marketing. Generate excellent leads and convince sales the leads are worthwhile. Deliver a few highly qualified leads and expect a high close rate. Ensure Sales is following-up with your high-quality prospects.

Transfer Prospect understanding to sales. Teach salespeople how to mine LinkedIn profiles and other marketing sources to easily establish rapport with prospects. Transfer the history over so salespeople have a head start.

## **7 Boost Results**

Track key metrics to know what's working and make improvements. Each company is special, and there are always opportunities for better results.

- Number of qualified prospects identified
- Number of qualified opportunities delivered to sales
- Sales close rate on qualified opportunities

Once you know your specific metrics, you'll know the quality of your pipeline, can reliably predict sales revenue, and will see where you can make improvements.

As you grow, you can add another Precise Prospect Profile and continue to build your firm.

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## What's Next?

If you've read this far, you're likely serious about creating a predictable prospecting system and connecting with your hard-to-reach prospects.

With enough time and money, I'm sure you could figure out all the details by yourself just like I did. Or, you may have most of what you need in place and I helped push you forward. In either case, that's great!

For many companies the fastest and least expensive option is to get some help. That's our mission: To build predictable prospecting systems for companies that enable reliable sales growth.

### Free Hard-to-Reach Prospects Review

If you'd like to review your specific situation and learn how you can find your Hard-to-Reach prospects, schedule a 30-minute review call.

This is not a sales call. I promise you'll get clarity and insights from the call, and we'll spend most of the call focused on your specific business challenges. (If at the end of the call you want to know how we can help, I'll tell you.)

**Call: 800-609-9669**