

BUSINESS

Take the chill out of cold calls

Cold calling is dead, or at least it should be.

Sam Richter, president of SBR Worldwide, is senior vice president and chief marketing officer at Actifi. He is a guru with a best-seller, *Take the Cold Out of Cold Calling* (Beaver's Pond Press, 2008).

Sam shows how to use free or low-cost tools to access information about companies, industries and people.

Whether it's effectively using popular search engines or accessing data via the invisible Web - the 90 percent of Web pages that search engines don't access - the information that you need for warm calling is there, if you know where and how to look.

Start by visiting www.takethecold.com. Visit Sam's Warm Call Resource Center for an updated list of business-information Web sites, search tips and download the Warm Call Toolbar so you can access business-information resources directly.

The following are a few of the search tips you'll find in *Take the Cold Out of Cold Calling*. Start using them to get the information you need to establish your credibility.

- **Google Filetype Search:** Imagine finding a competitor's sales proposal, an association's membership list or a high-end research report online. To find files online using Google:

1. Enter information you want and/or a company name.
2. Enter filetype, then choose an extension. For example, "plastics industry" plus "membership list" filetype:xls to search for a plastics-industry membership list in Excel.

- **LinkedIn.com:** This business-networking site helps you create connections at companies, learn about people and ask for referrals. Once you're registered, invite people into your network. Your online network can grow quickly because as people accept your invitations, and as you accept theirs, everyone's network is shared. Once you've built up a good-size network, you can use LinkedIn's advanced search to start searching for people by name, company or job title.

- **ZoomInfo.com:** ZoomInfo uses sophisticated Web-search tools to find information about people, then it automatically creates an online profile using different information sources. Just enter a person's name in the ZoomInfo search engine. If it's a common name, add the company name.

- **Your Local Library:** Most libraries subscribe to premium databases that you can use free. Want Dun and Bradstreet or ReferenceUSA to research companies, competitors, executive biographies and more? Want to see whether a prospect company you're visiting has ever been quoted in a local newspaper or cited as an expert in a trade journal? Find out which library databases you can access from your computer.

With the amount of information available online today, there is absolutely no excuse for not knowing something about your potential customer before you meet or call. Your prospects couldn't care less about you. What they do care about is whether you can help them achieve their goals.

Mackay's Moral: If information is power, then use the Web to catch customers.