

Warm up to cold calling and yield better results for your agency

 By [Johanna McDowell](#)

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Latest research conducted by Spanish based Scopen and the Independent Agency Search & Selection Company reveals how South African agencies are engaging sufficiently in cold calling exercise that are often critical for growing your business in the current economic environment.

In some quarters, cold calling is regarded as the life blood of some of the businesses operating in the marketing, advertising, communication industry's B2B environment.

Without cold calling, businesses can remain stagnant, with limited growth opportunities as a result of not attracting the right clientele that is good for an agency's future in the market.

Research around the trends in the marketing, advertising communication industry in South Africa initiated by SCOPEN and the IAS shows how little cold calling is done by SA agencies compared to the rest of the world.



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The lack of it results in limited improvement and development, unless the company invests in someone being able to use basic cold calling skills to instigate the necessary changes required to grow your agency. Furthermore, an important factor to take into consideration is that it is not about the number of calls that get carried out, but it is the quality of the calls that is important.

As clichéd as it may sound, the art to cold calling is not to be cold. Prep work is also important as there is no point in calling a client unless you have done your homework. The process of cold calling can also create a great list of potential clients, enabling a constant pipeline of business that may or may not come to your agency, but at least they know about it. This is because many agencies receive business through referrals.

According to the research by SCOPEN, South African marketers attribute 32.5% of their growth to their creative agencies and 34.4% to their media agencies. Taking proactive steps through cold calling can be a strategic element and be an independent function in your agency because it effectively makes things happen. Even start-up agencies need cold calling to start up and survive.

The anomaly in the South African communication, advertising and marketing industries is that they are not very big on cold calling as opposed to other markets such as the United Kingdom and the United States. In these international markets, it is an accepted practice that has yielded phenomenal results as far as gaining new business is concerned.

An agency that makes 48 calls to potential clients on a yearly basis usually has a one in four success rate. The average South African agency cold calling ratio currently stands at 18 calls a year. In South Africa we should be seeing more from agencies who are looking at acquiring new business.

If you look at it from a numbers perspective, if five clients say no and one says yes, it is an excellent way to approach new business development in your agency. It is also an integral part of marketing your enterprise to the right clientele by putting yourself out there and getting feedback.

Cold calling also helps the marketers as it gives them an opportunity to access a wider variety of exciting and innovative agencies which. As it stands, the South African market is not competitive enough, and rather concerns itself with putting down opposition instead of trying to be better than its competitors.

It's worth making a big effort to see cold calling in a different light because it is both a key to personal success and to business success. Cold calling by its nature opens business opportunities that can transform your business into a force to be reckoned with in the industry.

ABOUT JOHANNA MCDOWELL

MD of the Independent Agency Search and Selection Company (IAS), and partner in Scopen Africa, with a background that includes being on both the agency and the client side of the fence, Johanna McDowell is well-placed to offer commentary on marketing and advertising in the South African and international contexts. She built her career in marketing and advertising since 1974, holding directorship in both SA and British advertising agencies. She was MD of Grey Phillips Advertising in 1988.

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