Excerpt from Contrary to Popular Opinion—Cold Calling Does Work! Volume I: Effectiveness, The Art of Appointment Making

The following is the introduction section of the book.

WHY SHOULD I READ THIS BOOK, OR WIIFM (WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME)?

What Is This Book of Blogs About?

This book (and its companion, *Volume II: Efficiency, the Science of Appointment Making)* is about the business process of getting enough targets *into* the pipeline through the discipline of telephone prospecting (even if we begin the process by canvassing door to door).
Let's face it—very few of us like to cold call, and many of us actually claim that we don't do it at all. In reality, however, most of us go through the process of asking strangers for appointments every day. We just don't call it cold calling. To illustrate that point, I've included a blog in this book that addresses this in detail. It's entitled, *There's actually no difference between a cold call and a warm call*.

       This set of two books is about three things: defining the business process of appointment-setting, explaining why the process is necessary for almost all sales professionals, and showing how to do it more *effectively* and *efficiently*.

The Importance of the Discipline

Two salesmen who haven't seen each other in weeks meet in a coffee shop for lunch.
    "How's your day?" asks the first salesman.
    "Great! I'm following up on several good leads. I've got a great prospect I'm working with—and I'm waiting on a PO from another client."
    "Yeah," says the other salesman, "I haven't sold anything today either."[i]
    There are three morals to this story.
1. Conversations like this emanate from an empty pipeline.
2. A continuing flow of closed sales comes from a full pipeline—and a full pipeline comes from a continuous flow of Initial Appointments.
3. "Make no mistake," I said in *Is Cold Calling Really Dead? Searching for the Elusive Silver Bullet*, "at the end of the day, whether the call is cold or warm, it almost always falls to one of us sales professionals to pick up the phone and dial the number that starts the dialogue that begins the buying process."

    What this somewhat humorously attempts to point out is that the ability to set the Initial Appointment that begins the selling process is a critical process to all of us in sales. What it doesn't point out is that it is typically a neglected process. We like to say that it is the elephant in the sales bullpen. Everyone knows it's there, but because no one knows how to solve it, we just gingerly step around it.

Case in point, there are several books and websites out there today devoted to the concept that cold calling doesn't even work—or that it has become an obsolete or unnecessary discipline. (You can find some of them in the Other Resources section.)

If you read through the literature from those who say cold calling is obsolete or dead, you'll find a common theme: replace cold calling with pull marketing programs designed around technology and other activities to eliminate the need for it. Ideas such as website optimization, staying in contact through newsletters, e-mail, networking, and asking for more referrals from our existing customers are good ones, and they all work. As a matter of fact, we do them all and suggest that we all do as many as make sense in our own organizations to cut down on the number of cold calls that our teams must make. But here is the reality: if these pull programs don't generate enough Initial Appointments to fill the pipeline, we must still cold call. And, for the majority of us, they don't and we must.

For most of us in sales, the selling process begins with what we like to call an Initial Appointment. Initial Appointments may be face-to-face, over the phone, or through a web-based technology, but somehow or another, we've got to convince people (we call them targets) that it is in their best interest to open their calendar and make some time for that first meeting with us.

Here's what you need to know about this process. There are basically three sources for an Initial Appointment with a target. They are:

1. Lead-generation marketing campaigns that are designed to get people to raise their hand and tell us they are interested (this includes traditional advertising such as print, TV, radio, and direct mail, plus newer approaches such as social media);
2. Networking and referrals; and
3. Cold calling

But here's the rub with lead generation and referrals: just because someone expresses interest in our solution through one of our marketing programs doesn't mean that we'll get the appointment every time we call for one. Even strong referrals tell us no in exactly the same manner that cold call recipients do—they're just nicer about it because they don't want to offend the person who referred them to us. In other words, *the process we follow when asking for an Initial Appointment is exactly the same—regardless of whether the call is warm or cold.*

Therefore, the *skills, tools, and processes* we need to call marketing leads, to follow-up on referrals and networking connections are *exactly the same* as the ones we need to cold call. That also means that almost everyone who is charged to find new customers—or even expand his or her presence within existing customer accounts—must be able to *efficiently* and *effectively* set appointments.

Who Is This Book Written For?

I've written this book from the sales manager's perspective. But what if you're not a sales manager? What if you're a small business owner, independent sales professional, or sales professional reporting to a sales manager? This book is also for you, because—like it or not—God has given us all the ultimate equalizer or a level playing field, if you will. It's defined by the

same number of hours in each and every day. Those of us who are more *effective* and *efficient*, win. Those of us who are not, lose. It's as simple as that. And need I remind anyone that there are no monetary awards for second place in sales.

So regardless of whether you have responsibility for managing a team or just yourself, this book will have something in it to help you and/or your team become more *effective* and *efficient* at the business process of filling the pipeline.

Who Is Barry Caponi and Why Should I Listen to Him?

I have been selling my entire professional career. I've sold computer hardware and software solutions, property management services, life and health insurance, and of course the speaking engagements, sales consulting, and the training services I now sell.

All of these require mastering the business process of prospecting and appointment-setting. So not only have I been studying this process since starting my company in 2004, but I've had to set appointments to get those buying cycles going throughout my entire selling career.

I've been a sales manager at every level—from a front-line district sales manager to chief sales officer of a global company. I've had to manage sales professionals who also had to set appointments to get those buying cycles going. In those jobs, my main concern each day was about the insufficient and poorly qualified pipelines that I was being presented with and how to consistently fill them.

I've also personally sold solutions that required me to call at just about every level of management; as the price tags on what I was selling ranged from just a few thousand dollars to millions of dollars. Of course, when selling life and health products, I also called upon individual consumers in addition to businesses.

I hope that this helps you answer, "Who is Barry Caponi?" However, what about, "Why should I listen to him?" Since founding the Caponi Performance Group, Inc., I've concentrated our focus on this business process of helping our customers consistently get more targets *into* the pipeline. But why did I choose to concentrate on that instead of the more traditional sales training curriculum of helping get prospects *through* the pipeline?

That one is an easy question to answer since I had no desire to make our job any more difficult than it had to be. Sales managers have consistently told us that, once in front of a target, their teams were pretty good at scoring runs—to borrow a baseball analogy. (This has not always been true, but that's a story for another day.) There are also many excellent methodologies and sales consultants available today to help in this more traditional segment of the selling process.

I decided to concentrate our efforts where our targets believe their biggest barrier to success has always been—getting enough "at bats." Therefore, since we already had one of the very best methodologies for improving the *effectiveness* of setting appointments, (***The Appointment Making Formula***™ or as we affectionately call it, ***The Formula***), and had also found the best and most unique tool[ii] in the market to improve the *efficiency* of the process, why not concentrate our efforts where there was the most perceived pain? Therefore, our brand— ColdCalling101™—was born.

Since there are a lot of very good methodologies out there to help us take prospects *through* the pipeline phase of selling, the key question we asked ourselves when first addressing this challenge was why it continues to be so difficult for sales teams to get targets *into* the pipeline.

Our research and experience with our customers led us to conclude that the answer to that question was that everyone has been operating under a basic and *mistaken assumption*—to get quality targets *into* the pipeline, we can just use the *same skills, tools, and processes* that work so well to move a prospect *through* the pipeline. After all, selling is selling, right? (See blog entitled *The skills that are necessary in the pipeline phase of selling are not the same as those required in appointment-setting.* As for the issues involved in the *efficiency* side of the process, they are addressed in Volume II.)

The result of this mistaken assumption—the application of the traditional pipeline-selling approaches to the challenge of setting appointments—has proven to be both *ineffective* and *inefficient*. For instance, many companies tried to address *efficiency* by using the same CRM, contact managers, and sales force management applications that they used to help them drive prospects *through* the pipeline. Other companies tried to address just their *effectiveness* challenges by applying the same scripting and objection-handling approaches they use in the pipeline. When neither approach succeeded in consistently feeding the pipeline, most sales managers fell back on the traditional mantra: "Make more dials!"

In reality, the primary goal is relatively simple—to achieve the required number of Initial Appointments with as few dials as possible in as short a time as possible. Yet the accomplishment of this goal is obviously not so simple.

So here's why you should listen to us. We've studied this portion of the selling process extensively and:

1. To our knowledge, our ColdCalling101™ solution is the only all-encompassing approach to meeting the appointment-setting challenge (e.g., we supply all the *skills, tools, and processes* of appointment-setting);
2. The tool (Klpz) we recommend was specifically designed to address the different challenges of the appointment-setting process;
3. The skills (***The Formula***) are also designed just for the appointment-setting process;
4. We provide tools for the sales manager that they've never had before—and we teach them how to use those to be a more effective coach and manager; and lastly
5. The use of our solution will *sustain the gains* over a long period of time.

Adopting the ColdCalling101™ approach has transformed many a sales team's whole approach to prospecting. As a matter of fact, those that do implement our methodology routinely double or better the number of Initial Appointments that their sales team was setting prior to using our comprehensive approach.

Additionally, as this book is written from the manager's point of view, let me take a moment and expand on the one element on this list that applies to us as managers since it is critical to the success of any implementation of our solution and it is what makes the inevitable gains sustainable.

We have provided managers with a more powerful set of tools and reports than we've ever had before. This is accomplished through the *science* (a tool called Klpz from a company called Contact Science) that allows us to see the entire process in all of its component parts, and provides the tools and processes for managers to easily *monitor, measure, and manage* it through quantitative metrics.

The first challenge for managers in the appointment-setting process has always been the lack of credible, accurate, or timely information. For example, many of us ask our sales professionals for the number of Initial Appointments that they set each week. Or perhaps we additionally ask for the number of dials that they make to set those appointments. How many of us believe what's in those reports? In our experience, the answer is a very few of us.

The disbelief in those numbers is not based entirely on what we might think, though. Sure, some of our lesser-performing charges fudge (I'm trying to be politically correct here) those reports, hoping to buy time to catch up. But there is also the undeniable truth that it is difficult to keep up with the data that goes into those reports. Anyone who has tried to keep track of the number of dials, conversations, voice mails left and returned, plus appointments set each day can attest to that. We get interrupted, people return calls when we're out of the office, we make calls from the road, we go from call to call with no time to record the results of the last call, etc. There are many reasons why those reports are inaccurate at best.

However, since we must make management decisions based on something, we make do with the information we've got. Those that are familiar with the old expression, "Garbage in, garbage out," know the dangers of doing so. So the major topic we'll cover in Volume II is how to improve our underlying data—and how to turn it into manageable information.

A final note: this segment of the sales process is constantly evolving. For instance, technology (voice mail and e-mail in particular) has changed the landscape of appointment-setting over the past five years. And, while the approach we teach will work today, we encourage you to always be fine-tuning as your landscape changes. To help with that, I encourage you to sign up to follow our Tweets (announcing the topic of that week's blog) on Twitter (www.Twitter.com/ColdCalling101), visit www.ColdCalling101.com/blog, and watch for us on www.YouTube.com/ColdCalling101 to keep up with more on the skills, tools, and processes necessary to be successful at appointment-setting as they continue to evolve.

How Did This Book Come to Be?

As you might imagine, many of my customers have been clamoring for me to publish a book for quite some time. They tell me that the workbooks their teams are provided during our Prospector's Academies™, although great learning tools during the academy just don't have enough of the detail of what we covered to act as stand-alone reference tools somewhere down the road.

I've also had a number of colleagues who provide sales consulting in the pipeline phase of the selling process encourage me to do so as they also see the logic in our approach (not to mention the results in some of our joint customers).

All of that got me to begin writing a blog on this topic (www.coldcalling101.com/blog) back in July 2007. I generally publish one a week, so I've written quite a few over the years.

Lastly, it has come from two points of frustration with some of those others trying to provide competitive solutions to what we offer—or worse, an alternative panacea to the challenge. We've already agreed that very few of us like to cold call. So why would anyone want to make this process any more difficult than it inherently is? Yet, at best, that is exactly what many of these solutions do—using those ineffective techniques just makes the task more difficult and frustrating. At worst, those that say cold calling (and therefore also by association, the need for appointment-making skills) is dead are misleading sales professionals to believe that they do not

need to master this process at all—and that is an immense disservice. Sadly, not one of them has replaced the need for sales professionals to know how to pick up the phone and be both *effective* and *efficient* at the process that begins the selling process. As a matter of fact, this bad advice has probably cost some good sales professionals their jobs over the years.

Here's the latest example of the latter category: the advent of social media. I can't tell you how many sales managers and sales professionals told me in 2009, when sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter became mainstream, that they didn't need our services anymore because they were going to be using social media to get those Initial Appointments. The reality is that social media, at worst, is a time-waster and at best is just another warm lead generator where good appointment-setting techniques are still needed to convert them into appointments.

At the end of the day, we sales professionals are the ones who are *ultimately held responsible* for getting in front of enough targets to make our number. And, regardless of the target being warm or cold, we need to master the skills that are specific to the business process of using the telephone to set an Initial Appointment

At last count, I had nineteen different books on cold calling and appointment-setting sitting on my bookshelf, so I eat, drink, and sleep this stuff. Of those nineteen books, there are only three (see Other Resources at back of book) whose methodologies and techniques I agree with in some form or fashion. In other words, most of the stuff that's out there doesn't work in the long run. The reason that they seem to in the short run is that almost any process will work when we do find those few targets that are *in the market* when we call them. Also, any consistently applied process is better than just *winging it* as most sales professionals have been doing for years and still do today.

The ones I disagree with are all based on the same foundation. They spend an inordinate amount of time trying to perfect the ideal opening *pitch* that will immediately *wow* the target into believing that they just have to meet with us. Then when the target still says, "No," they attempt to overcome the no with logic. At this point, logic has not yet entered the target's mind.

Since most of our targets don't believe that they are *in the market* for what we're selling when we call them, those logical approaches do not work as well as we think they should. Most of the negative responses have little to do with reality or logic since they are nothing but what we call *conditioned knee-jerk responses* designed to get us off the phone. Therefore, logic doesn't work very well until we can get them past that first panic reaction of, "Oh shoot," (fill in your own word there if you don't like *shoot*), "another sales professional! How am I going to get rid of this one?" (See blog entitled *Top ten biggest mistakes cold callers make on the phone* for more on how and why our approach works so well.)

Conclusion

I don't expect this book—even combined with Volume II—to answer *all* of your questions. But I do believe that it will give you hope that there is an overall answer out there to the challenge in general and will answer most of the most common questions we hear. As a matter of fact, I'd love to hear about your successes as you apply the answers you do find here.

There are two more resources that you have access to if you are of the *do-it-yourself* ilk. I have written two white papers that are available on my website at www.caponipg.com. One is a senior management paper that describes the challenges of the entire process and describes what the alternatives are. It is called: *Is Cold Calling Really Dead? Searching for the Elusive Silver Bullet.* The second is more of a how-to white paper that describes how to actually write the

scripts for the opening and explains how we handle the, "no," we invariably hear. It is called: ***The Appointment Making Formula™****: The Secret to Setting More Appointments.*

Both, by the way, are free. However, if you're like most of our customers and don't have the time it takes to implement a comprehensive program yourself, I'd be remiss if I didn't offer our assistance to help your team double or better the number of Initial Appointments that they are setting presently just as our customers do every day.

If you'd like to figure out exactly what that would do to your bottom line, check out the Sales Activity and ROI Calculator page on our website. You can also find a description of what we do and how we do it there as well.

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[i] (This is the script for a cartoon I saw years ago. My apologies to the author for not properly crediting him/her, but I couldn't find his or her name.)

[ii] The tool we use is called Klpz, from Contact Science, LLC, located in Memphis, TN