

# FEEL GOOD MSP COURSE

## End of Year Prospecting Playbook

Ah, the end of the year.

The seasons are changing, the air is cooling, and people everywhere are taking this opportunity to relax and spend time with their loved ones.

Everybody but us, that is.

As a Managed Service Provider, your job isn't done just because the holidays roll up. Networks still need managing, passwords still need resetting, and cybersecurity threats are still ever-present.

The problem is that supporting your customers isn't the only responsibility you're carrying into the holidays.

Your pipeline is as hungry as ever. You can't just let two months go by without generating sales.

So how do we generate opportunities for ourselves during the busiest time of year? When budgets are tapped and decision makers are nowhere to be found?

Most prospectors are going to turn on the afterburners and start cranking out more touches in an effort to combat a lower connection rate. They'll make **more** dials, send **more** emails, and push harder to get meetings with decision makers, without changing their messaging.

If that sounds fun to you, close this book and go for it. I can't help you.

Because that sounds miserable to me.

Why would I do more of the behavior that isn't working during the holidays? Wouldn't that technically be...*insane*?

I'll cut to the chase for you. I have my own playbook for how to handle the end of the year prospecting market.

As always it's disruptive, countercultural, and most importantly: it works.

I'm going to give you the simple science behind my approach and then offer specific modifications for cold calls and emails that you can use to book meetings during the holiday season. I'll be using the same cold calling format as usual (intro, hook, qualification, next steps.)

## **Vacation Brain**

Weeks before people leave the office for the holiday break, they've already started the process of checking out mentally. As decision makers start wrapping up all of the projects for the current year, they rarely dedicate mental energy to the problems of tomorrow. They're usually more interested in getting through today successfully.

Because of this phenomenon that I've half-jokingly labeled "Vacation Brain," it can be difficult to get decision makers to concentrate on vulnerabilities in their IT environment during the final stretch of the calendar year. They'll often rationalize that any risks in their network are things they can worry about in the new year.

The big mistake of the amateur MSP owner in this situation is to pressure a prospect into discussing their IT pains, often through fear-provoking tactics. In my experience, I've never found it easy to convince business owners of anything even under optimal circumstances. Now imagine trying to awaken a prospect to the realities of potential risk while, in her mind, she's already lounging by a crackling fire with a stiff cider in hand.

Is it likely to work? No. But is it possible that it'll work?

No. It's not. You are not as much fun as vacation.

So the question is *HOW* do we feed our pipeline and generate opportunities during the holiday season if nobody wants to talk to us about their IT problems?

The answer? We don't generate opportunities during the holiday season. We pre-generate opportunities for Quarter 1.

## **A Different Approach**

Gatekeepers and decision makers are stuck on a track during the holiday season. They are laser-focused on getting to that sweet, sweet PTO. Anything that would require focus or excessive energy becomes an obstacle to avoid.

Cold calling a company and asking them to meet with you to discuss their IT needs falls smack in the middle of that category.

Even with this being the case, I don't suggest that you avoid prospecting. After all, as I said earlier, the pipeline is still hungry. Opportunities need to be generated. We just need to find a way to seek out those opportunities without compromising our prospect's sense of safety.

Said another way, we need to lean into the Vacation Brain, rather than trying to pull them out of it.

## How to actually do it.

First, change your cold call opener. Normally in the Feel-Good Close (FGC) we use a simple permission-based opener. We introduce ourselves, acknowledge that the prospect wasn't expecting our call, and we ask for enough time to explain our value proposition. This simple method has a 90% (or higher) success rate.

However, when the gatekeeper with Vacation Brain hears this opener, they will mentally check out. They'll give you the permission, of course, but they're still on their tracks.

After you've said your piece, you'll usually receive a simple "We appreciate you calling. She's unavailable for

the rest of the year." If you're LUCKY they'll write down your information, but at this point you are not an opportunity for them to pursue; you are an obstacle for them to overcome.

This impression won't go away with the Holidays, either. Come New Years, if they do remember you, you will be "the person who bugged me last month" rather than "the person who might fix my IT issues."

During end-of-year cold calling, it's important to bump the gatekeeper off of their tracks with our **first sentence**. And it goes like this:

*"Hi, my name is Brian with \_\_\_\_\_. I've only got a minute..."*

WOAH.

What?

Did we just big-time somebody on a cold call? A cold call that we made?!

Yes we did.

By telling a gatekeeper that WE only have a minute, we accomplish a slew of things before we've even presented our hook.

1. We (appropriately) confused them.
2. We grabbed their real attention.
3. We level the authority playing field.
4. We empathize with them (who says we can't all have Vacation Brain?)
5. We communicate focus and intentionality.

After we've blown their minds, we finish our opener.

*"I've only got a minute, but I can take about sixty seconds to tell you why I called and what we're doing. At that point you're more than welcome to hang up. Is that fair?"*

*"Yes, sure." (you should get a 'yes' 19 out of 20 times.)*

Having received permission during the opener, we move on to our standard hook. We present 2-3 specific problems that we solve for other companies in our Ideal Customer Profile (ideally the same demographic that we're calling) and present a pressure-free opportunity for the prospect to relate.

At the end of the hook, we hit them with the second surprise:

*"I should let you know that I'm booked solid through December, as I'm sure you are, but we can schedule fifteen minutes to link up about a potential partnership in mid-January. Do you have your calendar handy?"*

In putting a boundary up around our December, we let them know that they don't have to take any immediate action. This keeps them at ease and drastically increases the probability of booking a discovery call.

Most people don't put anything on their calendar for January until after New Years. This is largely because of Vacation Brain, but it's also because most business people are reactionary. They want to wait and see what the world and business will look like in 4-8 weeks when the holidays are over so that they can start planning around the status of the organization.

This presents a powerful opportunity for us. Decision makers have nothing but time on their calendar in January. Let's take some of it to talk about their IT needs for the new year.

You'll notice that every word in the sample script was focused on the matter-at-hand. In the FGC, we don't build rapport with inane small talk, but rather by focusing on the solution. Every other sales idiot has tried some lame, dated version of leaning into Vacation Brain with idle chat about the holidays.

*"Yeah, the break can't come soon enough, can it? Are you doing anything fun for the holidays? Travel plans? Where are you headed? Family out there? Yeah, we're headed over to...."*

This isn't rapport-building: this is the rambling of a self-centered and insecure salesperson who doesn't know how to structure a meeting.

You'll also notice that we did very little (if any) qualifying. Rather, we jumped straight from the hook to the next steps. Remember, they don't want to wake up from their gravy day-dream.

So don't make them!

We'll know they're qualified when they either hold the January meeting or they don't. Of course, you'll need to follow all of your standard best practices: send reminders, call the day before to confirm, etc. but we are accomplishing something hitherto unknown:

We are booking meetings during the holidays.

We're just holding them in January.

## Let's Summarize

So, what were the major takeaways from this playbook?

1. People don't want to do business during the holidays.
2. Our Pipeline can't afford two months without activity.
3. Adjusting our prospecting methods to accommodate for Vacation Brain can help us stand out and break through.
4. Pre-booking January meetings through November and December can significantly increase Q1 sales.

Not a fan of cold calling? This simple template works *great* as an email. Just remember to keep it tight, relevant, and laid back.

Let me know how this playbook works for you. Send your feedback to [hello@feelgoodmsp.com](mailto:hello@feelgoodmsp.com), or reach out on LinkedIn.

Now if you'll excuse me, I've got to go listen to Christmas music and pretend to check my inbox.