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PROSPECTING.com**

## **How To Create Your Own Free Report**

Give Value Upfront to Earn Meetings

Authoring your own value-rich report for prospects and customers will earn you meetings, appointments and have you seen as a recognized authority in your field.

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# 7 Steps To Creating Your Own Report

## Imagine for a moment...

that you're trying to get a first meeting with one of your target prospects. They seem like a perfect fit: You have done all your homework, researched them in Hoovers and attempted the 'go high' thing by reaching out to the appropriate C-level person. The problem is that you're just not getting a response! Sound familiar? What is also a reality is that there are probably sales executives from five competing firms trying to get a meeting with your prospect as well!



Remember when you were a kid and your parents told you that you need to give before you get? It's become the same in the business world. Sometimes the key here is to create some value for your prospect **first**. You're unlikely to capture their attention by trying to get a meeting granted from them first but rather by **you giving them** something helpful and useful up front –and we're not talking about a set of steak knives!



Imagine your prospect picking up a free report that was **authored by you** and being so thrilled with the information inside because it's chalk full of information and ideas. Information and ideas addressing a problem that has been on the top of their mind for a while and is causing some pain. Now who do you think your prospect is more likely to grant a meeting with- the appointment beggars... **or the value provider?**

**How can you stand out and differentiate yourself?**

If you're having trouble penetrating an account it could be for any one of several reasons. These reasons could include your prospect:

- **Not knowing who you are nor anything about your company,**
- **Not seeing any perceived value in your solution,**
- **Not having any perceived need for your product or service,**
- **They're just too darned busy!**

These are all fair assumptions on behalf of your prospect. You have to put yourself in their shoes as well. If you're selling business-to-business think about the position you're calling on and how many messages they must receive every day from salespeople. So you need to think about what value you're providing up front. The psychology behind getting a meeting is the goal of seeing if there is a fit between your company and your prospects' company. If your solution is geared towards business-to-consumer then the sale is between your company and an individual buyer. You need credibility, and to be perceived as an expert by your prospect. If you could capture their interest they will actually come chasing you for a solution. This is achievable by creating the value up front for your prospect. You can create this value by giving them something that they can use immediately in their jobs or their lives that addresses a real need or a problem. You can give them this valuable information for free and you can give it in advance of any contact with your prospect. The free information or advice can then be used as leverage to generate interest on behalf of your prospect and get a door opened for you.



## So...how do we create a snazzy free value-rich report that your prospects will love?

### The Do's:



- The free report needs to have **your name** on it as the author. **YOU** are going to write this report so YOUR name needs to be on it. When you have an idea for a topic go ahead and ask your current customers for feedback on it to determine if it's valuable enough for new prospects. Make changes if you think you need to. Put your company name and logo on there as well if you're in business for yourself. Get a nice cover on it that looks professional. I recommend a contributor from fiverr.com to create a cover.
- Your free report should be as targeted towards a specific a niche as possible. Do not try to have a solution for all people. For example 'common overlooked holes in corporate security penetration testing' is a better niche topic better than the all-encompassing 'corporate cyber security solutions'. A solution on 'business fashions for women' is too specific. 'Business fashions for pregnant women' is far more of a specific niche.

### A BIG Don't:



- Your report **CANNOT** be a blatant advertisement nor can it be a direct promotion for your products and services. It can communicate the fact that your prospects can come to you for additional information and solutions but keep your report focused on giving a solution to a pressing problem that your prospects can implement immediately in their lives. Focus on giving

value. The report should not serve you but instead it should serve your prospect while you expect nothing in return.

I have seen some sales executives create a free newsletter on their company that they send out to prospects. Sales management usually takes delight in this and views the sales executive as taking the bull by the horns and being proactive. While this can position the sales executive as an expert the newsletter usually fails unless the information inside is useful and valuable. How many times have you read a newsletter that was useful and valuable? I'd be willing to bet it's not been pretty much zero. Newsletters often contain promotions and updates from inside the company that the sales executive works for. What happens to newsletters that do not provide value?? That's right...they end up in your prospect's circular file known as the recycling bin or the delete button!

## The Steps

Let's go through the steps of creating your report. Your report can be as little as a page or 2, or can be much longer. It really depends on what works best for your topic, your business and your industry. **Take your time with this and don't feel the need to rush or put unnecessary pressure on yourself.** You can always make changes to your report as you're creating it and even after its finished.

### 1. Find the Problem or Need

The first step is to identify a problem or interest area for your industry's prospects. What is pressing for them? What challenge do they face every day that they might be wrestling with? Is there a new technology that they should be taking advantage of and are confused on how to proceed? Is there a new industry trend that everyone is talking about and could potentially leave your prospect behind if they do not take action? If you're really stuck on this you might start by asking some of your existing customers about what's top of mind for them. What solutions did they need to research on their own and then proactively found you to solve for them?



### 2. Research the Solution

Once you have identified a problem area you can start researching the solution (if you don't already know what the solution is). Use Google or your favourite internet browser. Go on forums. If applicable to you try to find someone relevant to interview and use portions of the interview for your report. You can again consider asking your existing customers as well to help you with material for your report.

### 3. Create a Catchy Title

Start the report by thinking about a catchy headline. Don't be afraid to get creative. You know your existing customers the best. What do they have in common that they would respond to when reading a title? It's also human nature to like numbers as well. For example "Clean Your Blinds at Home in 3 Easy Steps" is better than "Home Blinds Cleaning". "How My Business Was Hacked" is better than "Cyber Security Weaknesses".

#### 4. Describe the Problem

Start the body of your report by outlining what the problem is. Describe the problem in terms of how it starts and how it affects your prospect. Your prospect should read it and have an 'aha' moment where they feel that you really understand them and their situation. How does the problem affect their company or them personally? How does the problem branch out from them and potentially affect others? How does the problem limit them or cost them?

#### 5. Give the Solution

The next part you should outline the solution in full. This might be in the form of "5 easy steps" type of format. Do not hold back here and really give an outstanding solution that creates value. Make your reader appreciate that she received this information for free. I'm not saying give away the farm, but give away a bit more information than you would normally be comfortable with. You want to be seen by your prospects as the expert and authority in your industry. If you're selling corporate software that runs over the internet perhaps you can create a report on how the return-on-investment works in terms of increased sales and productivity within your customers' organizations. If you're a home furnishings salesperson then perhaps create a free report on home decorating solutions in terms of history, trends and color matching advice for small condominiums that seem to be so popular these days inside big cities. People really struggle with solutions like these.

**Bottom line: Give your prospects something to get excited about so they feel compelled to come to you with more questions!**

#### 6. Optional Graphics and Formatting

Things to consider might be to have a graphic artist jazz up your report -like this one! Use your best judgement on the graphics or layout and the type of look you're going for because it may need to match the type of prospects you're going after. Consider using a snappy cover on your report to have it look professional. Make sure your name is visible on it and how the prospect reading your report can get in touch with you via email and/or your website etc. Our goal here is of course to find you customers who will reach out to you if they feel they are a good fit for what you're selling, or grant you a meeting because they see value in you and what you can offer.



#### 7. Make Your Copies

Also consider creating a hard copy version as well as a soft copy. See yourself confidently walking into your prospects' office and leaving a nice bound free report and professional cover with his executive assistant. Or you can of course email the soft copy if you feel it's more appropriate or if geographic distance is an issue.

**One huge advantage of having a soft copy is that you can post it on your website, blog or within forums where people post about relevant topics similar to what your free report is about.** People who

find high value in your report may also share it with their friends and colleagues via email -furthering your reach and getting your name out there.

So please, put together your free report or some free information of value and start sharing it with your customers, prospects and whatever community you're involved with. I invite you to stay in touch and share your results with me!

Here's to wishing you all the success you can handle!

**Mark James Mayer**

