

## 7.5 Reaching Landowners via Phone

Phone calls include calling people who are already acquainted with your organization and have given you permission to call them. The method also includes calling people who don't know your organization (and whose contact information you may have purchased or acquired from a partner organization).

### WHEN TO USE PHONE CALLS

Phone calls are a one-on-one personal interaction capable of deepening relationships and commitments to act. Calling people who are already engaged with your organization is a great way to demonstrate

customer service and care in an ongoing relationship. But expectations for phone calls should be checked against the depth of the relationship. Cold-calling contacts can be effective for introducing a program, informing people about an event or resource, and getting permission for more detailed interactions (e.g., sending more information or setting up a meeting). Phone calls rarely result in real action commitments. In any case, given people's wariness of phone solicitations, persistence may be necessary to get people on the phone and overcome their skepticism sufficiently to advance the relationship.

<b>PROS</b> ▲	<b>CONS</b> ▼
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cold-calling can be a good channel for delivering personalized information and persuading people to take action.</li> <li>• The method is also good for forging and improving relationships with landowners. This is a great way to follow up with existing customers, learn more about them, strengthen the relationship, and increase their interest in what you offer.</li> <li>• If you are buying a telemarketing list, you can customize it to get people who more closely resemble your target audience.</li> <li>• This is a great first step to soliciting buy-in and assistance from a few "high-value" landowners who can help jumpstart your program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cold-call telemarketing has a negative perception and can elicit a negative response from audience members.</li> <li>• Telemarketing lists can be expensive and may not be up to date.</li> <li>• Many people do not answer phone calls from numbers that they don't know.</li> <li>• This channel does not reach people with unlisted phone numbers.</li> </ul>

## 7 GETTING THE WORD OUT

### HOW TO GET GOOD RESULTS

- A personal phone call is best placed after at least one high-quality interaction, preferably a face-to-face meeting. If the recipient has provided you their phone number, a call may even be expected and appreciated. A timely follow-up call can reinforce and advance your previous conversation and increase the landowner's commitment to working with you.
- Cold calling can be effective if your offer is well tailored to the needs of the people you're calling. For example, if you are offering landowners a management plan that qualifies them for tax benefits, you will have a higher success rate by calling landowners who have recently requested information about tax programs than if you're just calling landowners in general.
- The success of a phone conversation, especially a cold call, depends on the quality of your script. Your script should include, for example, a greeting and introduction, what qualified them as a contact for you or some reference point, the benefits of your services, and a transition to a question to engage the landowner in dialogue. The script should also anticipate and accommodate different landowners' needs and the different directions the conversation might take, including addressing landowners' questions and concerns. The script should be well rehearsed so that the caller can work it into a casual and comfortable conversation.
- It is very important to be realistic about what can be accomplished in the first phone call. Phone calls, especially cold calls, are for starting the relationship and perhaps securing an expression of interest. They are not sufficient to accomplish behavior change. Getting a landowner to agree to a meeting or take a first step, such as accept materials from your organization, is a great result. Be prepared to offer these specific action steps to interested landowners.
- While this differs by audience, phone calls are generally more successful on Thursdays, Wednesdays, and Tuesdays—in that order—with Mondays and Fridays best avoided. Early morning and evening are often the best times to reach people at home.
- Understand that the vast majority of people will either not answer their phones or not want to speak with you. Be prepared for that and don't take it personally. It is important to stay positive and enthusiastic, because those emotions are communicated to landowners in your voice.

### METRICS TO ASSESS PHONE CAMPAIGNS

- Response rates as a total number and percentage of calls placed
- Percentage of calls that lead to qualified respondents (i.e., people who fit your target audience)
- Percentage of calls that lead to favorable responses
- Cost per respondent (i.e., total cost of phone campaign divided by the number of respondents who take the desired action)