

I'm constantly asked how we go about qualifying the appointments that we generate. Do we do it before we pitch the person? Is it a process that takes a good deal of time? How far can one go with qualification (see previous blog entry)? What has become evident 6 years into this business, is that almost everyone expects us to do the qualification the wrong way round. In other words, qualify the prospect and THEN if they are still in the game pitch them. Let's put ourselves in the prospect's position. Someone you do not know has called you and is clearly making a sales call. They start the call by saying..."I'm from Company X, can I ask you what your software development plans are this year?" Let's then imagine what else the prospect was doing when the phone rang, how busy he was, and the fact that he can see this 20 questions phone call spiralling off into the distance... Frankly, the people we pitch are called more than 20 times per day usually (and they have a job to do), and this is the structure people use. I don't know about you, but my natural inclination is to tell the best lie I can think of (I'm in a meeting, I have no budget, I'm not the head of software development, I have lost my voice...) and get off the call a.s.a.p You see the problem is that in the scenario briefly described earlier the prospect was given no reason to answer any questions. He had no idea about how the company was positioned, he hadn't committed to anything as a result, even a few minutes to have a chat. So, easy to bail. We do this stuff the right way round. Be polite, ask the guy for his time (a few minutes), pitch him quickly and ask to meet. If he says yes (even after a few calls where the conversation has flowed and we've sent over collateral etc...) and we are in his diary to meet - ONLY then to we qualify him. And you know what? He tells us the truth (he is seeing our client in a few weeks anyway right so what's to lose?), he offers more information than we asked for, and he beds the meeting in in his own mind as a result. Now that's the way to do it.