

In the land of making sales appointments there is one quality that matters above all else - courage.

At any time in your life, making a phone call to someone you don't know, trying to make a human connection and deliver a business pitch at the same time, is very very scary. You can be Richard Branson making that call, but if you're cold calling the pope it's still scary.

To be frank, I'm not only talking about cold calling here. I remember a recent conversation with a 'grown-up' client, an MD in his middle fifties who was worrying on a Friday morning about a deal he was trying to close. 'I've emailed, texted and spoken to his colleagues' he said... trying to find out more information about progress and the final answer. We debated hard but in the end we agreed that he needed to call the guy and find out how it was going to go down, with him or the competition. He just got phone shy.

In recent months I've tried working with a client who has a number of consultants 'on the bench', and who should be working to generate new engagements for the business. I was asked to help 'train' the team to make calls to senior marketeers and strategy heads in blue chip companies... and I spent several half-days working them through our process, the rules of the road in calling people 'cold' who have very important jobs, and how email / letters just won't do it on their own.

After 7 weeks of work, I don't think more than 1 out of 10 people had made a single call. Maybe consultants feel more deeply that their professional pride will be hurt if they are told 'NO' by a prospect that they have called cold, after all they do sell their expertise and talent and they might feel devalued if told 'NO' too often?

Our team don't let themselves get into situations where people are rude to them on the phone. To get into that position you've generally pushed too hard, been impolite, or tried to answer a question you've no business going near. As such we don't get phone shy, and after all it's our job so we're pretty good at it.

So that's the answer. If you're phone shy it's either because you don't have the skills or you don't need the work enough. Most of our clients would say that it's not their skillset so they ask

us to help, comfortable in the knowledge that the work is being done to a high quality, and then passed on to them to develop and close.

The moral? Do only what you are good at.