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# TRAINING E-BOOK:

## **Making Cold Calling About CQLs**

Why CQLs Are the Most  
Overlooked Opportunities by  
Inside Sales Professionals  
and Sales Executives

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# Introduction

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The sales landscape has evolved significantly in the B2B world. Buyer behaviors have shifted, influenced by the availability of online content and changing decision-making processes. This transformation requires a fundamental change in how inside sales professionals approach cold calling and pipeline building.

The traditional method of cold calling to set appointments is no longer as effective as it once was. Instead, focusing on building **Conversation Qualified Leads (CQLs)** presents a higher-conversion, lower-pressure, and more aligned strategy for engaging prospects and driving results.

This e-Book explores:

- The evolution of B2B buyer behaviors and the role of content.
- Why CQLs are the most overlooked opportunities.
- How focusing on generating CQLs can simplify cold calling, increase efficiency, and boost appointment conversions.
- Practical strategies for incorporating CQLs into your daily call plans.

# Chapter I: The Changing B2B Buyer Journey



## The Buyer is in Control

Traditionally, sales representatives controlled the early stages of the buying journey. Cold calls could set appointments, and sales reps guided prospects from awareness to purchase quickly. Today, buyers are 88% through their purchasing decision process before speaking with a sales representative. Why?

- The explosion of content online: Buyers research solutions independently.
- Increased collaboration in decision-making among stakeholders.
- Complex B2B sales cycles require deeper education and nurturing.

## The Role of Content

Content now plays a central role in influencing buyer behaviors. When done right, outbound marketing is no longer just about setting appointments—it is about delivering value through content to:

- Educate prospects about your product or solution.
- Facilitate the decision-making process.
- Build trust and warm up leads before a sales conversation.

Thus, cold calling should be reframed as a process for building a pipeline of CQLs rather than immediately pushing for appointments.

# Chapter II: What Are CQLs?

## Defining CQLs

A **Conversation Qualified Lead (CQL)** is a lead generated during a cold call where the prospect expresses some level of interest in engaging further, often tied to receiving content or follow-up. CQLs are divided into four types:



A **Conversation Qualified Lead (CQL)** is a lead generated during a cold call where the prospect expresses some level of interest in engaging further, often tied to receiving content or follow-up. CQLs are divided into four types:

- **CQL1:** Prospect is open to an appointment but needs further confirmation.
- **CQL2:** Prospect asks a question about the company, product, or solution and agrees to receive additional information or a follow-up call.
- **CQL3:** Prospect refers you to the correct contact within their company.
- **CQL4:** Prospect expresses interest but requests follow-up in 30+ days.

## Why Are CQLs Valuable?

Unlike cold calls that aim directly for an appointment, CQLs create a pipeline of leads that are pre-warmed and better aligned with buyer behaviors. Conversion rates for CQLs far exceed those of cold calls:

- CQL1s and CQL2s convert at 30-40%.
- CQL3s and CQL4s convert at 10-20%.

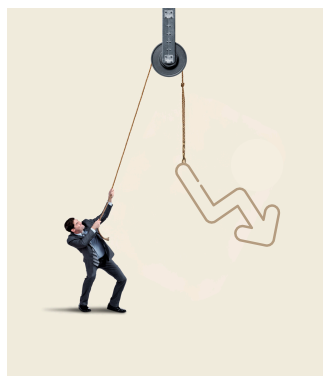
By focusing on CQLs, sales professionals build a sustainable pipeline that increases appointment conversions and drives long-term success.

# Chapter III: The Problem with Appointment-Driven Cold Calling

## Low Conversion Rates

Cold calling for immediate appointments leads to low conversion rates because prospects often perceive the request as high-pressure and premature.

- Cold-call appointment conversion: Single-digit percentages.
- CQL-driven appointment conversion: 30-40% for CQL1s and CQL2s.



## The Defense Barriers



When a call focuses solely on setting an appointment, prospects put up defense barriers:

- Objections surface early.
- Conversations end quickly.
- Opportunities to nurture the lead are lost.

By contrast, calls designed to generate CQLs focus on low-commitment asks: **"Would you be open to receiving more information?"** or **"Can we follow up in the future?"**

This approach significantly reduces resistance, making it easier to engage the prospect and generate high-value leads.

# Chapter IV: Rethinking the Cold Call Strategy

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Reframe the purpose of a cold call:

- **Old Approach:** Push for an appointment immediately.
- **New Approach:** Generate CQLs to build a warm pipeline and follow up.

When you focus on CQLs, every live conversation becomes an opportunity:

- If a prospect is **appointment-ready**, set the appointment immediately.
- If they are not ready, focus on securing a CQL.



Consider this:

- If you generate 4 CQLs per day, that equates to 20 CQLs per week.
- At a 30-40% conversion rate, this results in 6-8 appointments per week.
- Combined with other campaigns, you can achieve 10+ appointments weekly.

CQL-driven strategies not only simplify your efforts but also improve production.

# Chapter V: Practical Strategies for Generating CQLs

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## Adjusting Your Talk Tracks

**Your call plan should include:**

A qualifying question to confirm the right-party contact.

A low-commitment ask: "Would you be open to receiving more information?"

A clear follow-up process: Schedule a call within 3-5 days to avoid leads going cold.

## Every Live Conversation Matters

Remember: **Every live conversation is an opportunity for a CQL.** If you think the timing is right to ask for an appointment – you should absolutely go-for-it. If you strike-out on that appointment request, transition to a CQL call-to-action.

- Use the right tone to build trust.
- Remove pressure by offering value through follow-up and content.
- Always ask for small, low-commitment next steps.

## Follow-Up Best Practices

Follow up on CQLs within **3-5 days**:

- Reconnect while the conversation is still fresh.
- Reference the previous call and provide additional content.
- Set the appointment during this follow-up.



# Chapter VI: Aligning with Modern Buyer Behaviors

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## Facilitating the Buyer Journey

Modern buyers want time to:

- Consume content.
- Collaborate with peers.
- Explore solutions without pressure.

CQL-driven cold calling aligns with these preferences by delivering:

- Value upfront (content, information).
- Flexibility for buyers to engage on their timeline.
- Warmer, higher-converting follow-up opportunities.

## Building a Sustainable Pipeline

CQLs and MQLs form the foundation of a strong sales pipeline:

- CQLs: Generated through phone conversations.
- MQLs: Generated through email, social media, and digital campaigns.

**Together, these leads are hand-raisers, ready for conversion to appointments and ultimately, sales.**

# Conclusion: Making the Shift

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Cold calling is no longer just about setting appointments—it's about generating CQLs to build a sustainable pipeline. By shifting your mindset and strategy:

- You simplify the cold call process.
- You increase conversion rates and appointment production.
- You align with modern B2B buyer behaviors and preferences.

## Key Takeaways

1. Focus your cold calls on generating CQLs, not appointments.
2. Every live conversation is an opportunity for a CQL.
3. Follow up on CQLs within 3-5 days to maintain momentum.
4. Adjust your talk tracks to include low-commitment asks.
5. Align your strategy with buyer behaviors to drive long-term success.

By embracing this approach, sales professionals can make cold calling easier, more effective, and more rewarding. Start building pipelines, nurturing prospects, and converting hand-raisers into valuable appointments today.

## CQL Scoring Definitions

- **CQL1:** Appointment-ready prospect.
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