

Start My Consulting Business

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Client Pipeline Mastery

Finding Prospects

Once you've identified a profitable niche and fleshed out your ideal client profile, the next step is actually finding prospects. For most consultants and freelancers, this is a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be. Below are a handful of places where you can source prospects.

Keep in mind the concept of a sales funnel.

The sales funnel is a hugely important concept, because when you realize that not all leads or prospects will become clients, it'll help prevent feeling discouraged when things don't pan out-- which will happen.

In this report, I'll cover:

- How to identify prospects
- A framework for figuring out how to contact prospects

Now, the information in this report isn't meant to be a definitive prescription. You'll still need to experiment to see what works best for your specific market niche.

Try things out, track your results, then adjust based on what you find.



How to identify prospects

There are a huge variety of ways to source prospects. The tactics listed below will give you a start, but as always, think beyond the boundaries, get creative, and experiment.

Manta

[Manta.com](https://www.manta.com) is a great resource for identifying prospects. Manta lets you search for prospects in your niche, and more importantly, let's you filter prospects by factors like:

- company revenue
- number of employees
- industry category
- geographic location

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ReferenceUSA

ReferenceUSA is one of my favorite channels for sourcing prospects, since it allows you to get really granular in your search. Like Manta, ReferenceUSA lets you filter prospects by revenue, location, etc.

One thing I like about ReferenceUSA is that the data seems to be a bit better than Manta, and ReferenceUSA allows you to export lists of prospects to Excel so you can more easily manage your prospecting.

ReferenceUSA can be accessed via nearly any public library, so long as you have a library card. You'll likely need to check with your local library, since each library has their own method of accessing the ReferenceUSA database.

Other resources

Besides Manta and ReferenceUSA, the following can be good sources of prospects, depending on your niche. Again, these resources are not exhaustive, and you should think creatively about where else you might be able to find prospects for your niche--there are lots of sources.

- [CrunchBase](#): A database of tech companies.
- [LinkedIn](#): LinkedIn can be an excellent source of prospects. To find prospects on LinkedIn, you can either search people or groups. Perusing relevant LinkedIn groups can also give you a more detailed sense of trends and issues in your specific niche. By joining particular groups, you can contribute to the conversation, and then contact other group members (i.e., prospects).
- [Directories](#): Depending on your niche, you may also be able to find a directory of prospects. For example, you could Google for: building maintenance directory.
- [Trade associations](#): Trade associations can also be an excellent source of prospects. You can Google: building maintenance association. Go to the websites for the associations, and peruse the sites to see if they have a member directory.

How to contact prospects

OK, so now that you've got a list of prospects, what do you do with it?

Again, this is where lots of consultants and freelancers get stuck, especially because it can feel overwhelming to think about cold-calling a list of 1,000 prospects.

In general, there are a few primary ways to contact prospects:

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- phone
- emailing
- direct mail
- in-person
- other online channels (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.)

How do you decide which method(s) to use?

Here's a simple framework. Think about each channel, and evaluate:

- the **ease** of reaching a prospect vs. the **time** it requires, and
- compare those factors to the **results** you get (you won't know this piece when you start out, but by tracking how you got clients, over time, you'll see exactly what channels produce the highest return on your investment).

For example, in-person meetings typically take a lot of time to set up and lot of time to perform (you'll also likely have to contact lots of prospects before you secure an in-person meeting with one). Compare that with email, where email addresses are typically relatively easy to find, and it takes just a few minutes to write an email.

A strategy that works for many niches is to email prospects (where you provide something of value), and then follow up either with another email or 2, or a phone call.

Remember, you won't have a 100% success rate, where every prospect you contact converts to a client. Instead, your success rate will likely be closer to 1%, especially when you first start out. Once you know your niche and prospects better and you've iterated your approach and the messages you send to prospects, it's possible to achieve a conversion rate of 10%, 20%, or better.