



Using Warm Emails with Current and Dormant Clients (Part I)

This program is designed to teach you how to effectively reach out to prospects who don't know you. And I show you how to do that with very short, relevant and personalized email messages. But there's another way I've used warm emails to land new work. And that's by using email to reach out to current and past clients.

Now, you might think, "Well, what's the point of doing that?" Or why would my approach be any different than just emailing the client asking if you can somehow help them?"

Just like you have to do email prospecting right when you're approaching people who don't know you ... you also have to do email prospecting correctly with clients you've worked for before.

And here's the great thing about approaching current and past clients for project opportunities: these people already know and trust you! So that obstacle is out of the way. Which means you can often go from having zero work in your schedule to being BOOKED SOLID in just a matter of hours!

That's no exaggeration. I've done it myself many times, using the ideas and approaches I'm going to show you here. In fact, I've generated more than \$60,000 in income over the past four years just from applying these simple techniques.

It Takes More Than Just Asking...

Now, as I've alluded already, the key to success is *how* you approach these clients. Simply asking (or begging!) for work is not going to cut it. If anything, this will repel even your biggest fans. Instead, you need to uncover opportunities through the use of smart and ethical techniques.

These techniques I'm going to share with you may not sound all that innovative on the surface, but I guarantee that most of your clients don't get approached this way very often.

So make sure to try them out for yourself. Give them a chance, and you'll see how powerful they can be.

The Power of “Because”

Before we get into the details, it's essential that you understand the psychology behind many of these ideas, because even the slightest deviations in how you use them can really alter their effectiveness..

First, let's talk about what most people do. When following up with their clients to see if there are any work opportunities on the horizon, most freelancers resort to what I call the “just checking” approach. Their calls and emails go something like this:

“Hi, Bill, Pam Stevens here. Checking in to see if you have any projects coming up that I can help you with.”

There are several problems with this approach. But the biggest one is that it implies that *you* have a need and *you* need the client to help you out. There's no implied value, and you're offering no *reason* as to why you'd like to have the work.

And that's a mistake. Because research has shown that in many cases, offering even the simplest reason for your request will dramatically increase your chances of success.

There's a fascinating book out there called *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*. It was written by Dr. Robert B. Cialdini. If you don't already own a copy, I suggest you grab one. It's fantastic!

So in this book, Cialdini cites an experiment conducted by Harvard social psychologist Ellen Langer. In this experiment, Langer approached people waiting in line to use the copy machine at a library with the following request:

“Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine?”

Only 60 percent of those in line agreed to let her cut in line. Not a surprising result, right?

Langer then tried a different approach. She repeated the question to other groups, but this time she added a *reason* for her request:

“Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine because *I’m in a rush?*”

Surprisingly, *94 percent* of those asked let her skip ahead of them in line when she offered a reason!

At first glance, it may appear that the quality of the justification (“because I’m in a rush”) made all the difference. But when Langer tried this again with a third group of people and a modified version of the question, the results didn’t vary. Here’s what she asked the third group:

“Excuse me, I have five pages. May I use the Xerox machine *because I have to make some copies?*”

In that variation of the experiment, 93 percent of those in line complied, even though no real reason was given for the request (other than the obvious need to make copies).

So what was the key to getting compliance? **It was the word “because.”**

Cialdini explains that the word “because” (or even offering a reason for your request) triggers a mechanical response in most of us.

That’s an extremely important lesson. And it’s something you need to be aware of. So as I go through these techniques, keep in mind that *offering justification* is a key component of successful email prospecting with past and existing clients.

You’ll see what I mean once we get to the examples.

Technique #1: Going on Vacation

This first technique is extremely effective and can have the extra benefit of generating enough income to help pay for your next vacation. It can also help you have a more enjoyable time off ... and a better time adjusting when you come back!

To explain what it’s all about, let me tell you the story of how I discovered it. A few years ago, I decided to take two weeks off in July. Rather than wait until early July to let my clients know that I wouldn’t be available later that month, I contacted all of them in early May. I gave each plenty of notice and encouraged them to look at their project queues to see if I could get started on something.

Now... to be honest, I wasn’t expecting much out of this effort. My motivation was purely to avoid the stress of coming back home to a long list of project-related emails and a bunch of urgent requests.

But instead, something interesting happened. Two of my clients emailed me back and asked if I could start on some work immediately.

Turns out they had a few things they had been putting off. And rather than wait until the last minute, they figured this would be a good opportunity to get the projects started while I was still around and available.

The end result was landing \$5,000 worth of projects in a matter of days. This filled a gap in my schedule and helped me avoid the stress of dealing with new project requests right before leaving town (ever been in that situation?).

Plus, the extra cash came in very handy while I was away enjoying my time off in Lake Tahoe! And of course, my clients benefited by getting the work on time. So it was a win-win all around.

Now, you have to be careful and ethical when using this tactic. Don't make up a story if you're not really leaving town. Use this only when you're really scheduled to be away on vacation.

Also, you need to plan ahead. Calling 10 days before you leave town is too short a notice. Try to contact your clients 30 – 60 days before your trip—or even sooner if your typical projects take a long time to complete.

So what would a warm email script for this look like? Here's an example...

SUBJECT LINE: Upcoming vacation

Hi Don,

Just a heads-up that I'm going to be out of town on vacation from July 1 through July 16.

I know you had mentioned that you had a few projects you were planning on starting soon. If you're ready to jump on those before I leave, I'd be happy to put them in the schedule. If not, that's fine, too. Just thought I'd let you know that I'll be away at that time.

Please let me know either way when you get a minute.

Thanks!

-Ed

****Simple, to the point, 88 words total.**

Here's another variation on this script...

Hi Don,

A quick note to let you know that I'm going on vacation from 7/19 - 7/29, and I have some availability between now and then if you have anything you'd like for me to work on. You had mentioned a work order and service brochure in the email below.

Hope you're doing well.

-Ed

By the way, this was the actual email that woke me up to the effectiveness of this approach. Here's what I did: I took an email the client had sent me regarding some projects he was considering, and I replied to that email about a month later. I had already replied when he sent it originally. But I decided to specifically address the potential projects he mentioned when I sent my second reply. And as I mentioned earlier, it worked out really well for both the client and me.

Technique #2: The Delayed Project

Have you ever have a client award you a large project (or ask you to block off a few weeks in your schedule for a major assignment) ... and then put it all on hold at the last minute?

Frustrating, isn't it? Well, it doesn't have to be. I've found that a big unexpected opening in your schedule gives you a *great* reason to contact other current and past clients. In fact, every time this happens to me, rather than let that availability go to waste, I will often contact another client, explain the gap in my schedule and ask if I can help them complete a project in the queue.

A couple of years ago I had a longtime client award me three large projects. But then they put them on hold just a few days before I was scheduled to start working on them.

I immediately contacted two other clients, and within a few hours, I had filled more than *half* of that gap. Two weeks later I filled the rest. And while I was wrapping up that newly found work, the original client came back with those three large projects and was ready for me to get started on them.

What would a warm email script for this look like? Here's an example...

SUBJECT LINE: *I'm available next week*

Hi Lisa,

I was about to start working on a large project with another client, but it just got put on hold for at least a month.

So, basically, I have a big slot in my schedule! ;)

I know you had mentioned some case studies you needed to get written soon. I'd be happy to jump on those if the timing is right for you.

Just let me know either way, if you don't mind. That way I won't let that opening go to waste.

Thanks!

-Ed

Notice here again that I'm providing the REASON for my request. Also notice the conversational voice and the calm and professional (yet personable) tone. You want to avoid coming across as desperate or anxious! And you want to show the client what's in it for them—which in this case is to be able to get a project out of the way sooner than expected.

Technique #3: Help Your Clients Plan Ahead

Clients are busy people. And it's gotten worse over the last few years with all the layoffs that have left many of them doing work that used to take two or three people to complete.

Which partly explains why so many of them come to us with last-minute “I need this yesterday” requests. It's not necessarily that they're poor planners. They just have too many plates in the air.

As a freelancer, you can take some of this burden off your clients' shoulders by helping them plan better. For instance, if you know that a client's busy season is coming up soon, reach out to them, ask them how they're planning to tackle the work and see if you can help with some preliminary work.

Or, let's say you're a graphic designer and you know one of your clients will soon be going through a major rebranding effort. If you know you're about to have a few weeks of idle time, why not discuss this availability to see if you can start working on some initial tasks?

Or, maybe you're a writer and you have a client who usually hires you to write a white paper about once every quarter. You could mention your upcoming availability and see if you can start work on the next piece a few weeks sooner.

Fall is the busy season for one my clients. A couple of years ago I was a bit light on work coming out of the summer season. So I contacted them in August to see if I could get a better idea of what they were planning and when they might need my services. My reason for asking: I was trying to plan ahead for what also is MY own busiest time of the year (it really is).

Well, that inquiry triggered a discussion about a couple of specific projects, one of which we realized we needed to start on right away: it was a very nice \$1,500 project that I probably wouldn't have seen for weeks had I not approached them.

Again, it's critical to be honest when you use these techniques. The idea is not to manufacture something that's not true or not based on honesty. Not only is that unethical, it will also come across as a bunch of baloney. It never fails!

Which leads me to another important point. When approaching clients with these questions and proposals, you have to sound confident and professional. Don't come across as if you're scared or as if you need some work from them in order to make the next mortgage payment! Remind yourself that you're *not* asking for charity here. You're bringing good ideas and an excellent service to the client—and you're helping to make their jobs easier.

So let's look at an example email script you could use here...

SUBJECT LINE: Planning ahead...

Hi Angela,

I know fall is your busiest season. It's mine as well. So I thought I'd reach out and see if I could get a better idea of what you're planning (from a content development standpoint) and when you might need my help.

Just trying to plan ahead so I can be there for you when you need me.

Thanks!

-Ed

Notice a couple of things:

- Tone (use your own voice; be yourself)
- Style (short and to the point—key!)
- No hidden agenda (you're clear about why you're asking)
- Simple and straightforward, without coming across as begging for work

Technique #4: Take Advantage of Trigger Events

We've already discussed trigger events in Module 1. However, I'm going to show you how to use it with clients rather than with prospects. The principles are basically the same.

And just as a refresher, let me define what a trigger event is: A trigger event is simply a big event or change within an organization (or in that organization's industry) that creates an opportunity for you as a freelancer to either get your foot in the door or, if you're already working with that organization, to contact them about how you could potentially help them.

And again, the reason trigger events are so important is that they create a certain level of pain or need that makes that organization much more receptive to your services.

Naturally, you'll need to determine which types of trigger events are worth paying attention to, based on what type of work you do and what industries you work in.

I've used trigger events many times to contact both clients and prospects about opportunities for me to help them. One recent example was when the U.S. government enacted food safety legislation that involved better tracking of food ingredients and their origin. One of my clients sells software that enables food companies to do this more efficiently. So I approached them about writing a series of articles on the subject. They liked some of my ideas and hired me to write those pieces, which put several thousand dollars in my pocket in a just a few weeks.

Another great example of someone who uses trigger events to find opportunities is Jeremy Schultz. Jeremy is a graphic designer who specializes in design and illustration for print and the web. One of his differentiators is that he is a beta tester for Adobe (which means that he's part of a team of users who tests new software for Adobe and provides them with feedback).

The main advantage of being a beta tester is that he gets to use their new software months in advance. Which means that he can sell training and consulting for new Adobe products in advance of the competition. He can also market himself as the top Adobe expert in Iowa (his home state), which is a differentiator to many of his local clients.

And (here's the kicker)... every time Adobe updates or upgrades some of their products, he can use this as a trigger event to develop new service packages for his clients.

For instance, a few years ago, when Adobe announced the release of Creative Suite 5 (CS5), Jeremy began marketing two CS5 consulting packages for companies looking to upgrade. He figured that companies considering that upgrade could benefit from his input as a creative professional who knows CS5 better than anyone in the area.

He was right. This move led to a number of client engagements and opportunities—all because he took advantage of a great trigger event (the upcoming CS5 release) and used it as a reason to contact clients and prospects.

As you can imagine, the possibilities for email scripts that are based on trigger events are endless. How you approach your email really depends on what event you're leveraging. Here's an example from when I approached that client with a couple of story ideas...

SUBJECT LINE: Article ideas based on FSMA

Hi Jim,

The recently passed FSMA gives us a ton of potential angles on why food & beverage companies can no longer sit on the sidelines when it comes to track and trace technology.

Here's just one idea based on this article:

[URL to a great news article I found]

This angle is different because it talks about traceability/supply chain info as a competitive advantage at the CONSUMER level, rather than as a way to enable regulatory compliance or brand protection.

With so many consumers into sustainable/green living, organics, fair trade, local foods, etc., this is certainly becoming a hot topic. And since the biz is so competitive, retailers are using this to get an edge.

Anyway, I'd love to discuss some article ideas sometime next week, if you're interested. The time to get these out to the media is now, while the topic is hot and top of mind.

Thanks!

-Ed

Notice that this one was a little longer. It doesn't necessarily need to be, but because of what I was proposing, I felt I needed to provide a bit more detail.

Again, your particular email could vary greatly based on the specific trigger event you're using. But the principles remain the same:

- Get to the point quickly
- Be relevant
- Use solid trigger events only (don't stretch it)
- Tie what you do (or a particular service) to the event; don't expect the client to figure it out. Too much going on in their heads!