

Warm Email Prospecting for the New Freelancer

One of the most common questions I get about warm email prospecting is, "I'm a new freelancer. Can I still do warm email prospecting?"

Obviously, the answer is Yes! The great thing about this strategy is that you do NOT have to be a seasoned pro to craft powerful warm emails. And over the next 30 – 40 minutes, I'm going to show you why that's the case, and how you can use this strategy, even if you're a new freelancer.

One of the great things about warm email prospecting is that's a very flexible approach. This is not one of those techniques that you HAVE to do exactly by the book in order to work. As long as all the necessary elements are in your email, your message *will* stand out ... and in many cases, it will work.

In fact, if you're a new freelancer, this strategy is one of the best ways to kick-start your business. Let me explain why that's the case by taking this discussion to the 30,000-foot level.

There are only two basic ways to get prospects:

1. Inbound (where you get prospects to come to *you*).
2. Outbound (where you proactively reach out to potential clients).

Inbound Prospecting

Inbound marketing involves creating a client attraction system. And you do that by positioning yourself as an expert, as the go-to person in your niche or industry.

This can involve some combination of blogging, writing articles, writing a book, public speaking, focused networking, search engine optimization (SEO) and other similar tactics.

Over time, your goal should be to have 75% or more of your prospects come to YOU. This puts you in a position of power, because you're not the one doing the chasing. *Your prospects are!*

But here's the reality. **Inbound marketing takes time to bear *consistent* fruit.** It doesn't happen overnight. I've found that it takes at least three years of hard work and steady effort to get to that point.

There's also a slight disadvantage to this approach. When prospects come to you, **you don't get to handpick them.** You have to work with whatever comes your way.

That doesn't mean you have to take on every prospect that contacts you. But it means that if you're relying 100% on incoming leads, **that's all you have to work with**. So if the quality is variable, you're going to be subject to that variability.

Outbound Prospecting

The other type of prospecting is outbound prospecting. As the name implies, YOU are the one actively contacting prospects. Warm email prospecting falls into this category.

When you're starting out, most (if not all) of your efforts HAVE to be on outbound prospecting. That's because you don't yet have a client-attraction system that's generating inbound leads consistently. (This is a KEY point I can't emphasize enough!)

The biggest advantage of outbound prospecting is that YOU are the one in control. You get to direct and adjust your efforts based on your goals, needs, preferences and available time.

But the bigger, more important point is this: When you're starting out, you're going to HAVE to do some sort of outbound prospecting. And it's going to take up most of your time and energy. So the question is not *should* you do outbound prospecting. *The real question is what method are you going to use.*

In my experience, there's no other outbound prospecting strategy that's as easy to do, as efficient and as repeatable as warm email prospecting. And that's an important point, because the key to success when you're starting out is to commit to an outbound prospecting method that's both "doable" and can easily become a habit. It has to be "doable" enough that you can practice it long enough for it to become a habit. Because once it becomes habit, you're now on autopilot. And the chances of your continuing to take daily action go up dramatically.

OK, so let's talk about how to make WEP a habit. The first thing you need to do is to try and land a quick win. Because if you can get a quick win, you'll gain the motivation you need to keep moving.

How do you increase the chances of getting a quick win? You start your whole WEP process with a technique that's actually a variation of WEP. It's called the Launch Email Technique, and you can learn all about that technique in Module 7 of the program. But let me give you a quick explanation.

Launch Email Technique

This technique is all about sending emails to friends, colleagues and relatives letting them know about your new business and asking for their help in either hiring you

directly (where appropriate) or referring you to people who may have a need you can fill.

The idea is simple: You create a basic message and alter each one based on who the person is, what you know about them, what they do, and how you think they may be able to help you.

These are the people who know you best. They trust you and are much more willing to help you. As a result, this is where your lowest-hanging fruit may lie. That doesn't mean these are going to be your best prospects ever (or your best sources of referral). But getting fair-quality low-hanging fruit is MUCH better than high-quality prospects that take longer to close. And as you might recall, getting quick wins is one of the core tenets of this program. At this point in your journey it's better to get quick wins that are just OK than to get better wins that take longer to materialize.

This is why diet programs such as Weight Watchers and Atkins are so successful. They focus on helping you lose those first 10 pounds. They know that if they can help you see a 10-lb. loss in a short period of time, you're much more likely to stick to the program. Those first 10 lbs. may not make you feel or look amazing. But they're a big-enough loss to give you the boost in confidence you need at this point.

Let me give you a Launch Email sample script you might use:

Hi Joe.

It's been a while since we connected. Hope you, Amanda and the kids are doing well. Last time we met for lunch, your oldest son was about to leave for college. I hope that went well and that he's adjusting nicely to college life at Georgia. Go dawgs!

I'm writing because I've recently launched a commercial writing business. Specifically, I'm leveraging my 12 years of corporate training experience to help companies in that industry write better marketing and sales materials.

I wanted to see if you know of anyone who could benefit from my services. Let me tell you a bit about what I'm offering to see if anyone comes to mind.

Essentially, help clients write all the marketing content they don't have time to handle in house. With all the downsizing over the last 5 years, many training companies have more marketing materials to write than they have time or internal resources to create them. It's becoming a big concern for marketers and sales teams that need solid content to speed up the sales cycle.

I can fill that need in an affordable way. My services would be ideal for a small to midsize company in either the training or e-learning space. However, I can also serve educational material companies, as well as companies that provide employee assessment and talent management solutions.

I have more information about my services and background on my website: [URL]

If you think someone in your professional network could benefit from my services, would you be willing to make a short introduction? A brief phone or even email introduction would be great—whatever you prefer. Please know that I will treat anyone you send my way with the utmost respect and courtesy.

Thanks in advance, Joe. And don't hesitate to call me if you have any questions. Either way, let's catch up soon. I'd love to buy you lunch if you're available sometime over the next couple of weeks.

*Regards,
Tim Burns*

Why this works so well:

1. Positioned his new venture as a business, not a hobby.
2. Was clear about what he's doing, for whom and why he's different
3. Explained that there *is* a demand for what he does. He's not trying to pitch some off-the-wall service for which there's no need.
4. Was clear about what he wanted (an introduction).
5. Came across as a professional, not as an aggressive bully.
6. Explained that he helps companies fill this need cost-effectively. This doesn't mean he's cheap. It means that he delivers great value and that you're a more cost-effective option than hiring a full-time employee.
7. Paved the way for a follow-up call (easier to lay the foundation first via email ... then call). Why? Too much to throw all this at someone in a call.

Keep those 7 points handy as you craft your emails. Use them as your pre-flight checklist when drafting emails. And keep in mind that these emails can be shorter. Use your best judgment based on whom you're sending it to.

Having said that, you may feel more comfortable calling some people rather than emailing them. Either way, the point is you want to make it as easy as possible for the other person to understand what you do and who would be an ideal prospect.

The other point is to start this effort with your highest-probability contacts. Your mom loves you, but if she's 91 and has NO idea what you do or what it means, she may not be the best person to start with. So, start with people in your professional network who are well connected and would quickly "get it." Then, move down your list to lower-probability contacts.

BTW, don't discount them just because you don't think they're well connected. Some of my biggest wins throughout my career have come via contacts that I would have never imagined could put me in touch with the right people.

Misconceptions About WEP

So, again, I want you to start this WEP effort with your personal and professional contacts, and I want you to send each a Launch Email. I've found that in 30 to 50% of cases you'll get a client—not necessarily the "perfect" client, but definitely a paying client—from this list. And that's key, because again, that kind of win will give you the confidence and momentum you need to now approach your "cold" prospects, which you'll contact with warm emails.

OK, so let's talk about using WEP with these prospects who **don't** know you. And let's start that discussion by talking about one of the biggest misconceptions about WEP: that you need a large portfolio and tons of experience to make this strategy work.

I'm going to let you in on a little secret: What makes WEP work so well is NOT an impressive portfolio or a long track record as a freelancer. 80% of the success of your warm email will come from the following variables:

1. The subject line is intriguing without sounding like a marketing email
2. The email is short and to the point
3. You've included a good meaningful connection and you've *led* with that connection (the reader can tell this email was for HIM alone)
4. You included a decent value statement
5. Your approach is professional and your email well written

Let's talk about each of these variables.

Subject Line

First, I want you to put yourself in your prospects' shoes. Think about what their day is like. People with hiring authority (especially those in the corporate world) get 150+ emails per day. They're running around from meeting to meeting and have very little time to process their email. So in order to keep up, they're constantly going on a "Delete" blitz.

That means that if they don't recognize your name, your subject line better be intriguing enough *without* sounding like a marketing email. And the best way to do that is to use your meaningful connection as the basis for your subject line. We'll go through some examples in a few minutes.

Short

Next, think about what would happen if you're a super-busy marketer and you go ahead and open the email ... only to see a wall of text in front of you. It just feels like too much work! So you either scan it real quick to see if there's any reason to read further ... or you hit delete ... or you save it for later (a "later" that may never come).

Or think about those emails where the sender spends a big paragraph trying to warm up to you. You don't have any time for that. "Get to the point! What do you want?" you're asking yourself!

Keep your emails short. Again, you want to shoot for 125 words or less. There may be some cases where there's a mutual contact involved and/or the situation is so unique that it calls for a bit more copy. But even in those cases, there's no reason to go above, say, 175 words. And again, those are the exception, not the rule. So try to stick to the 125-word limit.

Meaningful Connection

Third, think about what would happen if you got right to the point and you told the prospect something that was (1) relevant, and (2) personalized. What if there was NO doubt on the prospect's mind that you wrote this email for HER. This is not something you sent 500 other people. This is something you typed up for her alone. That changes things. Because this is now a one-to-one communication—from one person to another. Not from one to many.

Think about what happens when you get an email from someone you don't recognize. You see the email in your inbox, the subject line seems relevant. You open the email and it's about something specific to you and your business. How does that compare to a generic email that was sent to 10,000 other people? It changes things immediately, doesn't it?

Value Statement

The next point is that you have to have a clear and relevant value statement. It doesn't have to be perfect, but it does need to communicate what you do, for whom, and why you're different. And it needs to do this in a couple of sentences.

Professional and Well Written

Finally, your email needs to be professional and well written. By professional I'm not talking about addressing your prospect as "Mr." or "Mrs." ... or using "sir" or "ma'am." I'm talking about keeping a professional tone that doesn't scream of "sales copy." It communicates interest without sounding desperate. It keeps the message focused on the prospect, and it invites a response so you can take this to the next step, which will hopefully be a phone conversation.

If your email takes these variables into account, it will be different from 99% of the marketing email they get. And "different" is KEY to the success of your WEP efforts. In fact, I can't emphasize that enough, so I'm going to repeat it by saying it another way...

The fact that your email is *different* will make it stand out and get attention. And that alone will dramatically increase your chances of getting a response.

Notice that none of the variables I talked about to make your email different require that you have years' of freelance writing experience. They don't call for a deep portfolio of samples. They simply require you to follow some basic principles.

"B-Level" Scripts

In Module 4, I talked about the concept of "B-level" scripts. B-level scripts are simply email scripts that aren't quite as impressive as some of the sample scripts I show throughout the program. It's not that they're bad, it's just that the meaningful connection you're using is not quite as powerful. Or maybe your value statement is not as complete as you'd like.

And that can be a very common thing when you're just starting out as a freelancer. The fact is that when you're new, most of your emails are going to be B-level scripts. And you know what? That's not going to change as you get more experience. In fact, **even when you've been in business for a while most of the warm emails you sent out will very likely NOT be A-level scripts.** Perfect scenarios like that don't come around every day. And if you wait until they do, you'll waste dozens of opportunities that could have yielded a great client.

So the reality is that in most cases, your scripts are going to be more along the lines of a B-level message. In other words, it's going to be good, but not outstanding. And that's OK. Again, **as long as you have all the ingredients in place**, your email will still stand out in your prospects' overcrowded email inboxes. And you'll soon see why.

At the end of the day, B-level scripts are the ones that are going to make you successful. That's because these are the everyday scripts you'll come up with most frequently. They'll become your bread and butter. So, while A-level scripts will give you the big home runs, B-level scripts are your base hits—the workhorse emails that will yield you most of your leads and clients over time.

What makes these scripts B-level rather than A-level? Again, it's not so much that they're missing a key element of the structure we've discussed in this session (the key elements from the template we covered earlier). In most cases they're considered B-level because the connection you're trying to make is maybe not as strong. Or maybe your value statement is not as complete as you'd like.

Again, that's OK. You still want to try and include all of the key elements in your script, but if some of them are a bit weak or just not as strong as you'd like, that's fine. If you feel this is a prospect worth reaching out to, go for it! Let me give you some examples of B-level scripts so you can see what I mean. But I'll start by sharing an A-level script, and then I'll show you a B-level version of that same script. That way you can see the difference.

SUBJECT LINE: I saw that you're publishing a lot of white papers

Hi Jennifer,

I've come across your website a few times over the years because I do a lot of work in the corporate health and wellness area. As I looked through your site this morning, I noticed that you're starting to publish a lot of white papers.

Do you have an internal resource for this? Or are you working with an outside professional?

I ask because I'm a business writer who focuses on white papers, eBooks and long-format reports. Because of my experience the wellness field, I may be able to help you get these pieces produced faster and more cost effectively.

Here's a link to some samples of my work: [URL]

Let me know if you'd be interested in discussing further.

*Regards,
[Signature]*

I would actually consider this an A-level or "A-minus" level script. So, let's look at a B-level version of this same script:

SUBJECT LINE: I saw that you're publishing a lot of white papers

Hi Jennifer,

I've come across your website a few times and I noticed that you're starting to publish a lot of white papers.

Do you have an internal resource for this? Or are you working with an outside professional?

I ask because I'm a business writer who focuses on white papers, eBooks and long-format reports. Depending on your situation, I may be able to help you get these pieces produced faster and more cost effectively.

Here's a page on my website that describes my background and experience: [URL]

Would it make sense to connect on the phone to discuss how I may be able to help?

*Regards,
[Signature]*

So what makes this a B-level script? First, notice that I didn't specify how I came across their website. I know that may sound trivial, but notice that in the first example I added some credibility and justification by explaining that I had come across their website several times over the years. That showed that I've been around and that I'm familiar with their organization.

One way to improve this would be to add some justification to that opening line by explaining why or how I came across their site. If I had just read an article where they were mentioned, I could make the opening stronger by saying that. But if that wasn't the case, that's OK too.

Moving down the script, notice that my value statement wasn't as strong and relevant as it was in the first example. I didn't say that I do a lot of work with organizations in their industry, probably because I don't. So instead, I went straight to my question about need.

However, further down I at least talked about one of my specialties, which is writing white papers, eBooks and long-format reports. So that's definitely a differentiator. I then made a soft offer by giving them a link to my About Me page on my website. That's not quite as powerful as sending them to a samples page. But if you don't yet have a case study sample, sending them to your website is still a good idea. Just make sure to send them to a page that talks about you and how you help clients.

So I would rate this email as a B-level script because it lacked some of the specificity of an A-level script. However, because it's still personalized, relevant and short, it's still very good—and a MUCH better pitch than what this prospect would normally receive from other service providers.

Plus, notice that it's still somewhat specific in terms of the type of project you're pointing to. You're not saying you can do A, B, C, D and E. You're pointing to a specific type of deliverable you've identified and can help them with.

Example #3:

Let's take a look at one more example...

SUBJECT LINE: Congrats on the new position

Hi Jack,

*I just read about your new promotion in the Atlanta Business Chronicle.
Congratulations!*

I'm writing because I work with professional services companies to create rich marketing and sales content. I know ABC Partners has produced several white papers and case studies in the past. If you're looking to expand that effort, I can help you turn around high-quality content quickly and cost-effectively.

Here's a page on my website that describes my background and experience: [URL]

Let me know if you're interested in discussing further. No sales pitch — just to see if we might have a good fit.

*Regards,
[Signature]*

Let's examine this script in more detail. Both the subject line and opening sentence are great. They're tied together nicely and they create a relevant and meaningful connection right away.

The next paragraph contains the value statement. However, notice that this value statement is missing some key elements. For instance, there's not much in the way of differentiators or track record. Yet you'll notice how this person has at least focused on one potential service they could help this prospect with. As with the previous example, this person didn't list 17 things he could do for the prospect. Instead, he focused on one core area.

From there, he again included a link to a page on his site that describes his background and experience. And he ended with a soft offer to chat further, and he pre-empted any resistance by telling the prospect that he's not going to have to endure a hard sales pitch if he agrees to a phone call. Instead, it will be a professional business discussion.

So, definitely a B-level script. But notice how effective it still is. I would send this out without hesitation.

Bridging

Let's talk about the concept of "bridging." This is a technique I developed recently, and it's something that can work really well when you're starting out. And here's why: When you don't have a lot of freelance experience it can sometimes be a bit challenging to find meaningful connections you can leverage. The last script I shared is a good example. Let me read the first part of that email:

SUBJECT LINE: Congrats on the new position

Hi Jack,

*I just read about your new promotion in the Atlanta Business Chronicle.
Congratulations!*

I'm writing because I work with professional services companies to create rich marketing and sales content. I know ABC Partners has produced several white papers and case studies in the past. If you're looking to expand that effort, I could help you turn around high-quality content quickly and cost-effectively.

Notice what just happened here. I congratulated this person on their new position, but then I launched into my value statement. That's kind of a big jump, because the tie-in to his promotion and what you do is not as clear. I mean ... what does his promotion have to do with your writing services?

The Bridging technique allows you to fill this gap by tying these two items in a more natural way. Let give you the revised script using this bridging technique so you can see what I mean:

SUBJECT LINE: Congrats on the new position

Hi Jack,

*I just read about your new promotion in the Atlanta Business Chronicle.
Congratulations!*

After reading the article I visited your website to read more about your company, and I noticed that you have quite a few white papers and case studies posted. I'm writing because I work with professional services companies to create rich marketing and sales content. If you're looking to expand that effort, I could help you turn around high-quality content quickly and cost-effectively.

In this example, I bridged by telling him that the article prompted me to go to his company's site to learn more about them. And it was there, while on his site, where I noticed something I could help them with.

See the difference? See how this comes across more sincerely? Not only that, but it makes your message more relevant, and it increases your chances of getting a positive response.

Value Statements

Before we move into Q&A, I want to talk briefly about value statements. This is another area where a lot of new freelancers get stuck because they're not sure how they should talk about themselves. Or maybe they haven't picked a niche yet, and that's keeping them from deciding on their statement. Or they feel that they don't have much to talk about, so they're stumped.

Here's the thing: Yes, it would be nice to have a very powerful value statement right off the bat. But it's also better to start with something simple than it is to wait until you can come up with something brilliant.

Your value statement is yet ANOTHER ingredient in your warm email that doesn't have to be perfect in order to make an impact. As I mentioned earlier in the call, as long as you have something decent in there, your email will still stand out. So give up this idea that you have to sound amazing right out of the gate in order for warm email prospecting to work for you. Because you don't!

If you're still having trouble with your value statement, I'm going to share a secret with you that should make this process easier: Don't focus on what you've DONE as a copywriter. Rather, focus on what you're CAPABLE of doing ... OR what you want to do for clients.

Here's the value statement I used 9 years ago when I was just getting started as a freelance copywriter:

I work with software companies to write white papers, articles and case studies that help accelerate their sales cycles. Unlike most business writers, I am an 11-year software sales veteran, so I understand the complex, strategic selling process and the critical role marketing plays in this process.

Sounds pretty good, right? Well, when I wrote that, I had yet to write a white paper, or an article or a case study. I knew I could do them because I had written similar pieces in the past. I had also studied how to write these pieces. But I hadn't yet landed a client and written one of these for someone else. Yet I still talked about them, and I talked about them as if this is what I did ... because *it is* what I did—I now I was CAPABLE of writing them.

And interestingly enough, when I did that, prospects didn't really question it. The only question they would ask is, "We're looking for a writer to put together a white paper on this topic. Is that something you do and would be interested in?" I NEVER got the question: "Have you written white papers before?"

I'm not going to get into a lesson about writing value statements, because I cover that at length in Module One. But I just wanted to emphasize the fact that your initial value statements don't have to be perfect. As long as you include as many of the elements as possible in your statement (what you do, for whom, why you're different, and maybe one credibility element), that's a good start.

Remember: Your value statement will evolve over time. Sometimes very quickly. So start with what you have. Don't delay. And see where it takes you. As you see what works and you think of new ideas and approaches, revise your statement.