

Phoning It In

BCBusiness Magazine, July 1999

It pains David McCullough, it really does – B.C. high-tech companies with big dreams and great products that farm out their sales to people who don't know what they're doing. Maybe they're 'onesies': reps who call once and, if they don't hear back, never phone again. Maybe they are picking the wrong prospects, wasting time with people who probably don't want what they have to sell.

Either way, it's lost opportunity – and it irks McCullough, founder of North Vancouver's Transamerica Microsearch. He's made an art out of selling software and other bits of high-techery over the phone, and when other people can't get it right, well, it pisses him off.

"It breaks my heart how much business we're missing," says McCullough, 54. "You don't have to go to Africa or Asia to make good money for this nation; you could spit to the most powerful country in the world. I get memos all the time from Export Canada about selling to some Island in the Pacific. Well, let's do a good job in New York! Let's do a better job in Philadelphia, in Chicago, in Dallas!"

The energetic, American-born McCullough is certainly doing his bit, having made tens of thousands of calls since starting Transamerica in 1987.

Along the way he's sold everything from software for SFG Technologies and Chancery, to security cards, to thermal oxidizer afterburners for Inproheat Industries.

He moves all that merchandise thanks to his pet concept of "Assembly Line Selling", which derives from Henry Ford's vision from churning out Model Ts: by dividing the labor and keeping everything in continuous motion, you can boost



David F. McCullough of Transamerica Microsearch:
Coming soon to a voice mail near you

your productivity immeasurably. Same goes with sales: rather than focusing on the close, always keep calling new prospects to keep the line moving. And rather than manning the entire 'assembly line' yourself, concentrate on the phoning while other specialized reps follow up in person.

By dividing the labor and keeping everything in continuous motion, you can boost your productivity immeasurably.

More advice: pick your spots, and lavish attention on your best prospects. Some firms tend to carpet-bomb

the universe with sales calls, thinking that more calls equals more business. If a client doesn't respond immediately to the first voice mail, he or she gets dropped from the list. Wrong.

"They're not building anything, they're not what I call 'working a record,'" McCullough says. "I take you through a process if you're a person in my database. It takes me longer, so I can't help people who want to blast 6,000 people in a month... You do that, and you've lost half the business you would have gotten."