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How can I grow a business when most firms I approach are happy with the status quo?



James Caan

Dear James

I AM a business development manager for a recruitment firm providing payroll solutions for contractors. I cold-call more than 100 companies a week but most companies are happy with their suppliers. How do you recommend growing this business?
Sanjay Tailor, www.n-save.com

IT'S important to demonstrate your client knowledge and market intelligence whenever you make an approach. The fact-finding element in business development is hugely important but is often neglected.

So do some research on each business you talk to and ask such questions as, what do they like about current suppliers? What made them choose them in the first place? What could be improved on? That way you can define the need first.

Also, think about what is special about your service and where you can add value.

Know your market – many recruitment firms are often part of bigger business which might not appear connected either by name or market sector. This can be useful as a referral, for example: "I have spoken to X who tells me you are part of Y, and suggested I make contact..." Map your opportunity pipeline and find out when the firm's preferred-

supplier lists are up for renewal.

Go to recruitment industry events and network. It can be one of the best ways to make agency contacts. Also, consider creating a weekly or monthly newsletter – it's a great way to spread messages to potential and existing clients and keeping your business name in their minds.

Social media are good; you could start a LinkedIn group and invite agencies to join and publish relevant topics to be discussed.

Research your trade bodies so you have access to members' meetings and meet senior professional recruiters. And start a referral program: satisfied customers recommending you can be a powerful way to build your client base.

■ For the full article and news of James Caan's free app, go to standard.co.uk. His new book, **Start Your Business in 7 Days**, is out now