



STOKE B2B SERIES

EPISODE 2

The Unknown (Channel U)

Channel U refers to all the companies that will be pursued with a direct sales channel. They're the companies that you have not met and likely don't know exist. This is the universe outside of Channel K (the Known). Channel U is the target of your outbound sales efforts.

To effectively develop this channel, you'll need to select a set of tools and tactics that you understand or can quickly learn. You must be able to afford them in terms of both money and time. It's most important for you to develop a few tools and tactics that you will commit to using on a consistent, programmatic basis over time.

Developing the Unknown is a function of sales and a good sales process. For all businesses, the holy grail of developing Channel U is to begin the process as "close to the close" (i.e., as near to the point of closing the deal) as possible. This is primarily a function of good data. Think of it this way, as you develop a go-to market prospect list, the more that list resembles your current customers and the problems you solve for them, **the higher your hit rate is going to be**. This sounds obvious, but is difficult to achieve – it's the reason we started Onemata – to solve the problem of who to call and why to call them.

Tools for Channel U

Our tools of choice to penetrate the Unknown world are email marketing, trade shows and industry functions, and cold calling. Google SEM advertising is a popular method, but we typically reserve ad budget to support inbound efforts, which are detailed in the next blog.

Email marketing is a cost-effective means of getting the word out to a targeted audience, but it takes a lot of work to do it properly. Great data is the critical ingredient for developing a powerful email strategy. The reason most email campaigns are ineffective is that they are indiscriminate and land in inboxes of people who don't have the problem you solve.

Email marketing is dynamic and will allow you to leverage different messages to different vertical industries. In our own emails, we pay very close attention to what phrases get the best responses and spend our time adjusting our email templates to be relevant. It takes time to hone both data and message, so be patient and stick with it.

Trade shows and industry functions are an opportunity to be present and get to know people in person. The problem with trade shows is that people show up to trade shows thinking that's the event.

However, the event begins before the show, as it provides a reason to call someone to see if they are attending. Our focus before a show is to set up as many appointments as possible, make a favorable impression, learn a few critical pain points, and gain agreement for follow-up. Just like with email, if you do not have a great way of determining through data who your best prospects will be . . . you are wasting time.

~~Cold Calls~~ Close to the Close Calls

What's the best part of getting at the Unknown channel? – yes, it's the cold call. Again, effectiveness is about good prospect data – we like to call it “close to the close” calling, **because coffee is for closers** ☺

Yes, we make calls, lots of them. Again, targeting is critical. It feels awesome to call someone with a problem that you know you can solve; these calls go well nearly all the time. Persistence in following a programmatic plan pays off here. We reserve cold calling for strategic opportunities with mid-market to enterprise level firms. For you it may be different. For us, cold calling is a surgical tool deployed against high-value targets. Typically we concentrate on 50 prospects over the course of six weeks, roughly two calls a day. The goal is to make a 1:1 connection with each contact, to secure a time to talk in more detail if we are able to mutually determine there is interest. These are **quality conversations**. Everyone – even the busiest business owner – can make two calls a day.

The critical skill with all your Unknown efforts is to follow up. It will do you no good to make this effort if you don't follow up. Discipline yourself to follow up with every single person you call, email, or meet at a show or function. Every single person you meet or talk to deserves a follow-up from you. This will serve you well.

Things to Think About / Implement

1. To really optimize penetrating Channel U you must work with one of the better data providers (we like Onemata). But if it's not us, you still need to be able to get past the “call list” to a deeply refined set of targeted prospects to avoid wasting your life energy on unproductive efforts.
2. Decide on a set of strategies and tactics to penetrate the Unknown channel. Establish a frequency with which you will engage in activities and track results, then adjust and repeat.
3. Select sales automation tools (we use Salesforce as our CRM, HubSpot for marketing automation, Onemata for prospect list development, and BuzzBuilder for email marketing. Visit our velocity partners page to view more recommendations). Take this step: choose and use.
4. Go to your industry events and trade shows. They are the perfect reason to make a connection. Prepare your desired outcomes in advance and arrange meetings to reach those outcomes in advance. Be the only guy on the floor that knows exactly what you are doing and who you are talking to before the event (a fully scheduled calendar).
5. Make ~~cold calls~~ close-to-the-close calls, but make sure you are prepared with a great prospect list that represents high-value targets. Selling glasses of water to those dying of thirst is pretty fun – it's a call everyone wants to make.