



ATTRACTING CLIENTS WITH ACQUISITION AND NETWORKING

Acquisition: selling your product or service to potential customers

With acquisition, you try to reach potential customers, make an appointment, or win orders. Use the steps in this tutorial to find out what acquisition methods there are and what suits your company and target group best. Then start targeting your acquisition with the step-by-step plan. We will look at 3 forms of acquisition:

- Cold acquisition
- Warm acquisition
- Online acquisition

Do you want to start networking right away? Then go to [page 9](#).



Forms of acquisition



Cold acquisition

With cold acquisition, you approach potential clients who do not yet know you and try to sell your product or service. For example, by approaching companies by phone for an appointment. But you can also use promotional teams at an event or advertise on social media.



Warm acquisition

Warm acquisition means approaching an existing customer. For example, you send a customer who has bought something in your online shop a special offer for similar products. With warm acquisition, you build on the relationship with your customer.



Online acquisition

Online, you acquire assignments or customers through social media, your website, influencers, or online platforms. When you have the same look online and offline, you come across as credible and strong. While you are talking to a potential client, they may already be looking at your website or social media.

Cold acquisition step-by-step plan

Step 1: Identify your target group

Are your customers consumers or freelancers? Then you may only approach them by phone or e-mail if there is a customer relationship or you have received explicit permission. Do you want to target consumers or owners of an eenmanszaak with cold acquisition? Go to [online acquisition on page 8](#).

Decide exactly which companies you want to reach. In other words, identify a [clear target group](#), for example by industry, company size, or location.

Think in terms of problems or challenges

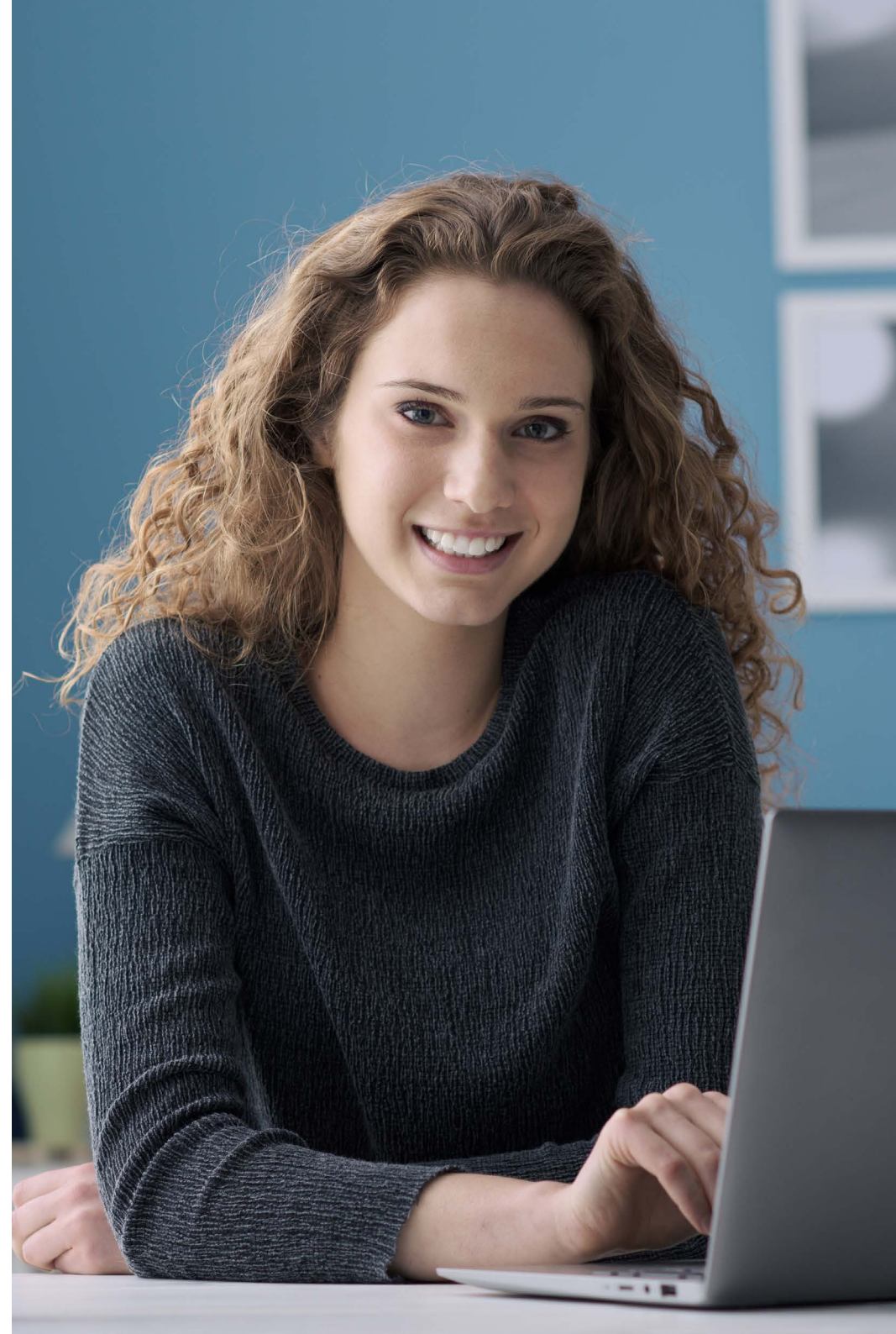
What problems or challenges do you solve with your product or service, and what kind of companies can you help? Suppose you provide HR software that automates payrolls. Then that is interesting for growing SMEs for whom payroll administration is taking more and more time. Your software can save these entrepreneurs a lot of time and unnecessary problems.

Think about existing customers

Do you already have a number of clients? Then analyse your current customer database or CRM system. Do you see similarities? For example, many financial service providers or retailers, often in big cities, and usually around 50-100 employees. Then make a list of new, similar companies to approach based on these characteristics.

Multiple contact moments

Give cold acquisition time. Research shows that you need an average of 7 contact moments before someone decides to do business with you.





Step 2: Select companies

Do you have a clear idea of your target group? Select 10 or 20 companies from your list that you will approach first. Make this manageable for yourself, for example: approach 5 companies per day or per week.



Step 3: Find the right contact

Determine who the decision makers are in relation to your product or service. Think HR managers, buyers, or IT managers. This way, it is more likely that they will recognise the problems you outline. You can, for example, search on LinkedIn for job titles in combination with the company in question.



Step 4: Research the company

Do you have an appointment? Then prepare well. Find out what the company's mission and vision are and what is important to them. Has their industry or company been in the news, what are they sharing on their website or social media?



Step 5: Pitching

Pitch your product or service as clearly as possible. Be clear about what you do, who you do it for, and what sets you apart from your competitors. Tune your sales pitch to your listener. Focus on their problem and challenge first. Then describe how your product or service offers a solution.



Step 6: Finalise and follow up

End the conversation with an action point, for example, a next call or appointment, or sending an offer. Take the initiative for the follow-up yourself, so that your potential customer does not have to make an effort. For example, send an eye-catching card with a personal message and invitation for a new appointment.



Step 7: Evaluate and measure

Keep a good record of who you spoke to and record notes from the conversation in a CRM system or in a document such as Excel. This way, you can come back to any wishes your potential client has mentioned at the next meeting. You can also evaluate what works. For example, that it is not convenient to call at certain times, or that some customers prefer email or WhatsApp to phonecalls.

Step-by-step plan warm acquisition



Step 1: Make time for customer contact

Make time in your diary for personal customer contact. For example, to send a newsletter or email marketing. Or look at other ways to retain loyal customers. Always ask customers' permission first before sending them a newsletter. Read about the [rules for email marketing](#) and avoid penalties.



Step 2: Choose a good contact moment

Choose a good or unexpected moment for customer contact. For example: if you sell personal care products, you know when they are likely to be running out and you can offer the product again with a discount. And do not send personal messages only at Christmas, but also at an unexpected moment. The longest day of the year, for example, or when you have been in business for 6 months. This will help you stand out.



Step 3: Use satisfied customers

Use satisfied customers to attract new customers. For example, give enthusiastic customers a gift voucher to pass on to friends or acquaintances.

Step-by-step plan online acquisition



Step 1: Online platforms

Use online platforms such as Freelancer.nl, Werkspot, and Hoofdkraan.nl to sell yourself to new clients



Step 2: Lead generation

With lead generation, potential clients come to your site via a social media message, for example, on a special landing page where they can download a whitepaper by giving their email address with permission to contact. After the download, you build on the contact by, for example, sending newsletters with interesting articles or discount codes.



Step 3: Influencers, SEO, and SEA

You can also reach new customers through influencers or search engine marketing, SEA and SEO.

Getting started with business networking

Networking can be done both online and offline. Online, for example, you share knowledge and insights from your field and send connection requests on networking sites, such as LinkedIn. Or you take part in an online event such as a webinar. For offline networking, you can think of company get-togethers, trade shows, regional events, and conferences.

This tutorial mainly concerns business networking, but networking can be done anywhere. At a birthday, a neighbourhood get-together, or in the school playground. Who knows, maybe the person you spontaneously talk to has an aunt, neighbour, or colleague who needs your service or product. In short: choose what suits you and your business.



Four reasons to network

Networking is about building relationships in which you mean something to the other person and/or the other person can help you further.



New clients

KVK research shows that business networking is the way for many self-employed people to acquire new customers. When you network regularly you strengthen your business and make it known.



Recommendations

With networking, you get to know new people who can recommend you to others later.



Collaborations

By networking, you get in touch with other entrepreneurs, potential clients, and partners. This can lead to new business opportunities, collaborations, or even investments.



Personal growth

Networking allows you to learn from other, experienced entrepreneurs. When you talk about yourself and what challenges you have with your business, the other person often talks about how they have faced the same challenges, and you can learn from that in turn.

Practical networking tips

The most important thing about networking? "People need to remember you and feel good about their conversation with you. The more you practice, the better you become at networking." These 13 tips from entrepreneur Judith Smits will turn your next networking event into a successful party.

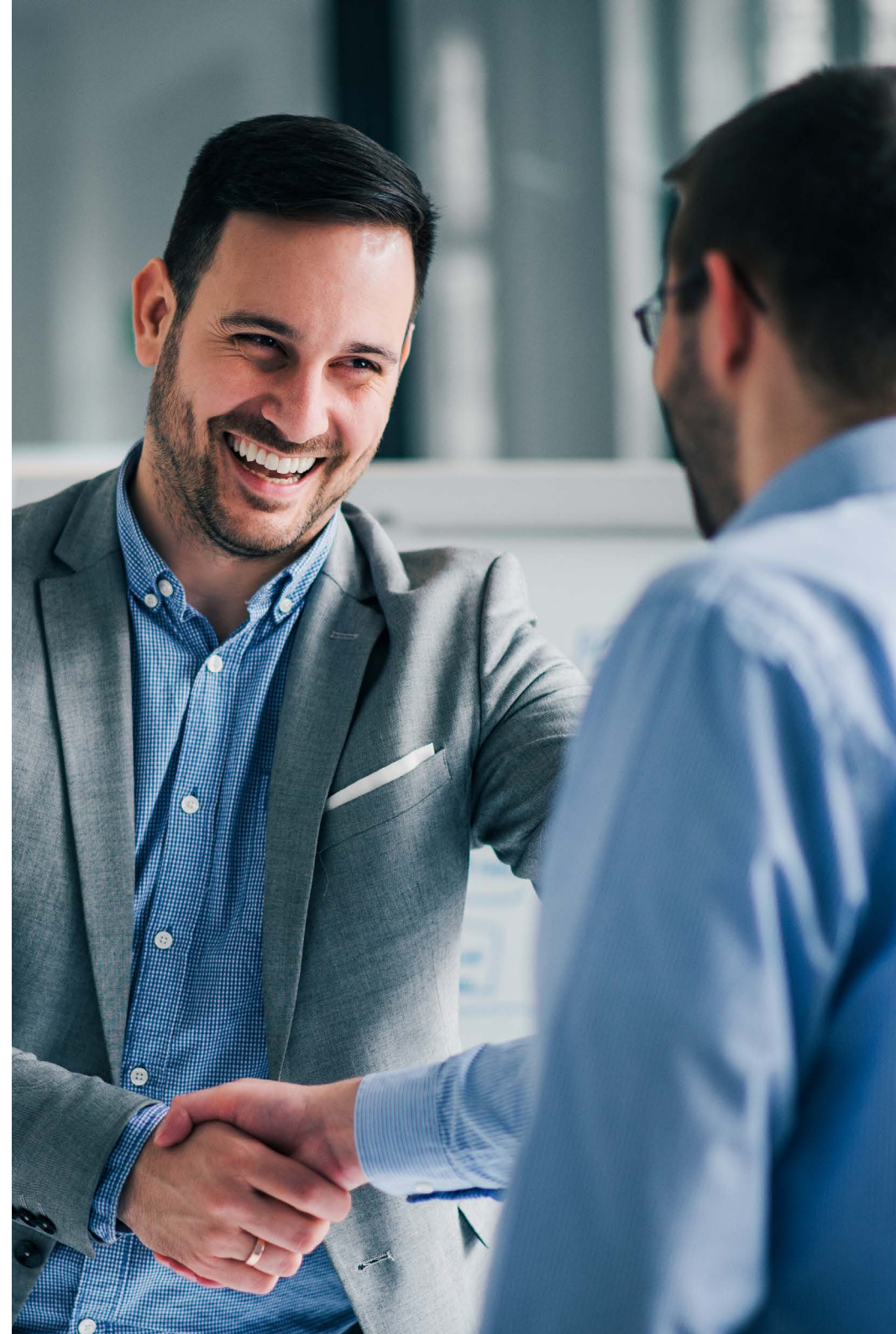
- 1 Go to networking events with a speaker or theme that you yourself find interesting and that fits your goals and target audience. You can connect with strangers more easily if you have shared interests.
- 2 Check the (online) guest list of the networking event. Is there someone present you would like to speak to? Then contact that person in advance, for example via a connection request on LinkedIn. Add a personal message saying you will be at the event and explaining why you would like to meet them.
- 3 Join a group of 3 or more people; 2 people are usually already in a conversation and then it is harder to break in. Smits: "I always ask 'Do you guys mind if I join you?' That sounds more positive than asking 'Am I disturbing you?', I feel."
- 4 First show interest in the other person and from there see if you have a link with them and whether you can mean something to each other. For example, ask something about the content of the event, such as which sessions the other person attended, and show interest in the conversation.





- 5 Think of different itches. Smits: “For example, I am a speaker, do interim jobs, and am a mother. When meeting, I look at which pitch best suits the moment.”
- 6 Describe briefly and powerfully what you do so that people remember it easily. Practice describing what you do in 1 or 2 sentences. As much as possible, use clear language and examples of clients or jobs you do. So not: ‘I am a coach, and I make sure people are empowered’. But: ‘I help clients whose turnover is lagging. I make sure they earn 100K a year now’.
- 7 Remember, you are not talking only to the person opposite you. Smits: “I often see people wanting to move on quickly when the person themselves is of no use to them. But you are also indirectly talking to that person’s network. So, finish your conversation well and listen carefully, so that the person leaves with a good feeling and may recommend you to someone else later.”
- 8 Keep your conversation short. An average successful networking conversation lasts 5 minutes. In that time, you can already lay a good foundation. You can talk to many more people than you might think.
- 9 Make sure the other person can find you easily. For example, link up with each other via the QR code on the LinkedIn app on your phone. Smits: “Almost always I see that we have mutual acquaintances and say: ‘Hey how nice, I see that you know this person and that one. Please give them my regards’. If you have common friends or acquaintances, it makes your contact more personal, and the other person is again more likely to remember you.”

- 10 Keep challenging yourself. Set a goal that will make you stay longer and get to know new people. For example, if you're just starting out, it might be 'Today I'm going to approach 4 people I don't know yet' and if you're experienced, it might be 'Today I'll speak to that director and approach 5 different strangers'.
- 11 Do you mainly speak to people online? Make sure you have enough (natural) light so that you are clearly visible on camera. Link afterwards with the people you speak to online. For example, if you are in a break-out session from Teams or Zoom. You then expand your network again.
- 12 Follow up on a conversation or meeting. Once you have exchanged contact details, keep the contact warm. After a while, send another message via LinkedIn if you have a good reason. This could be anything, maybe you have read or heard something interesting in the media that relates to their company. Or the person you spoke to might mean something to someone in your own network. By helping the other person first, they are also more likely to think of you for an interesting assignment.
- 13 Keep track of who you have spoken to, for instance in a CRM system or a programme like Excel. Sometimes you talk to so many people that you forget valuable contacts if you do not save them somewhere right away.





Any questions?

If you have a specific question about finding customers, contact our [Advice Team](#) or use our tool for [customer acquisition](#).

See:
[KVK.nl/en/marketing](https://www.kvk.nl/en/marketing)