

Entrepreneur®

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Timothy Askew

54, FOUNDER AND CEO OF CORPORATE RAIN, INC. (CRI) IN NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK

DESCRIPTION: Executive sales outsourcing boutique



START-UP: \$10,000 in 1996

SALES: 2003 estimated sales of \$1.9 million

THE PRODUCER: A failed Broadway producer, Askew began looking for other options, and his CEO acquaintances offered jobs. Although he was reluctant to take on anything full time, several projects involving CEO-to-CEO dealings exposed Askew to an untapped niche in the sales process. Corporate Rain is the result.

HANDLING REJECTION: CRI arranges high-level "new business" meetings, or pre-sells, with senior executives of companies targeted by his clients. Why do companies

turn to CRI? Says Askew, "Basically, people hate doing this. There's a ton of rejection involved." Coupled with the slow and systematic process, CRI can be regarded as a godsend. "Rejection is our middle name—it's what we do," says Askew. "Our success rate is 8 to 15 percent. Believe it or not, that's phenomenally high."

PHONE ETIQUETTE: Reaching out to corporate decision-makers, CRI's sales force is comprised of entrepreneurs and former executives who have Ph.D.s, MBAs or other high-level credentials and thus can have what Askew describes as a "peer-to-peer approach" to sales, representing clients like AT&T, Con Edison Communications and Deloitte & Touche. "It's basically phone work," says a modest Askew. "Mostly our success is just plain persistence. It's not like we're a genius company—we just use very high-level people. We also emphasize courtesy above success."

SOCIAL WORK: Askew's master's degrees in education, philosophy and religion shape his take on business. "It's more from an ethics and service point of view rather than pure profit. I just assume the profits will follow if you tell the truth and do right by people."

—April Y. Pennington