



EARN MORE, WORK LESS, ENJOY LIFE

Monthly e-newsletter for business owners, managers, and the professionals who serve them

Topic: Winning New Customers

Bottom line, to be successful at winning new customers/clients, you need to be perceived as being different, special, better. You cannot afford to be viewed as a commodity. Commodity companies are paid commodity prices/fees. There is tremendous power and profits in being perceived as unique, different, better.

Spend time researching and establishing your company's Unique Selling Proposition (USP). What is your most powerful, compelling benefit/advantage? What is the big, overt advantage of your product/service? Why do customers continue to do business with you? What major frustrations do you remove from their lives? Once you define your USP, broadcast it like mad in your sales presentations, in your brochures, in your direct mail, on your website, in your telephone answering methods, in your advertisements, in your news releases, etc.

Do not let your USP simply be "quality, service, and price". This says nothing different and has no emotional power. It sounds trite and comes across as "blah, blah, blah" to your prospective customers. Instead, clearly delineate your differences and performance guarantees. Instead of being a mere marketing consultant, be a marketing partner that guarantees revenue results (pay-for-performance) or the client doesn't pay. Now that is different and understandable. FedEx's earlier USP was "when it positively, absolutely needs to be there overnight".

Additionally, to achieve substantial increases in profits and customer satisfaction, you must challenge yourselves to come up with new products/services or repackage old ones in a way that truly excites and delights customers/clients. To qualify as killer ideas and killer solutions, they need to include the following:

- 1) An obvious, compelling **benefit** to the potential buyer
- 2) Believable **evidence/reasons** that support this benefit (credibility)
- 3) A **significant difference** from existing products/services (dramatically new and better) and,
- 4) A simple and effective means to communicate the benefit, evidence, and difference to the target market.

Such killer ideas can revolutionize your business and industry. Dream big.

In addition to being perceived as different, special and better, you need to try new marketing strategies to attract new customers/clients. Here are some other brief ideas for bringing in new clients:

- **Leverage your past customer relationships.** Revisit with past, worthy customers or inactive customers and express your interest in rekindling the relationship and solving any of their current problems. These folks did business with you at one time, wrote out checks to you, and may well be receptive to re-activating their relationship with you. However, you must identify and heal any unresolved wounds and share with them the benefits of doing business with your company once again. Give them an inducement (bonus, discount, additional service level, etc.) for taking action and ordering once again.
- **Formalize and optimize your referral systems.** Identify (crunch numbers, don't rely on hunches) your best-performing referral sources (some use the term market influencers) over the past 12 months and be sure that you thank and reward them for their efforts. Communicate with these proven providers often to maintain a top-of-mind awareness in their heads. Once you identify these top providers, shamelessly clone these folks. For example, if you are a house painting company and determine that your best referral sources have been real estate agents, replicate this formula. Don't complicate the magic. Educate these and others as to the specific types of customers and circumstances you serve best. Referral source cultivation is one of the most underutilized yet low-cost, high-yield marketing weapons that exist.
- **Leverage those relationships that your business helps to financially support** (your banker, accountant, attorney, suppliers, financial adviser, insurance agent, etc.). To determine which would make for good informal sales agents for your business, ask the following types of questions: "Who will benefit from our success as we continue to grow and expand?" "Who do we write checks to on a regular basis and would have a vested interest in supporting our business development efforts?" Identify these relationships and ask these folks to reciprocate and support your growth efforts through leads, referrals, testimonials, etc.
- **Leverage indirect competitors to gain new customers.** Indirect competitors are companies that you seldom go head-to-head with competing for business. For example, you could establish a formal referral relationship (swap leads, pay finder's fees, share revenue, co-marketing, etc.) with an indirect competitor that is much larger or smaller than you are or in a different geographic region. For example, a smaller Accounting firm could establish an alliance with a large Accounting firm and swap leads that don't fit their respective niches. A small, traditional plumbing business could form an alliance with a plumbing company that focuses on doing only the tough, complex, big jobs. Leads could flow both ways.

- **Gain leverage from current clients/customers.** Ask current buyers for introductions/referrals to other potential buyers or ask current customers to provide endorsements, testimonials, or serve as references. Always ask current clients about other unmet needs they may have.
- **Identify and cultivate complementary businesses as strategic alliances.** For example, a technology consulting firm would want to form alliances with those that can help steer business their way (accountants, software/hardware vendors, other non-competitive consultants, etc.) How do you find potential referral or alliance partners? Ask, “Who already has the trust and respect of our prospects?”
- **Make doing business easy, convenient, and risk free.** Do not ask the other party to assume risk if they start a business relationship with you. Instead, communicate an unconditional, money-back guarantee. Don’t keep your guarantee hidden, broadcast it. A credible and specific guarantee will bring in far more business than it costs you. Here is a simple example, “If you don’t find our technology training courses among the best you have ever taken, simply ask for a refund before the start of the second day and we will gladly return 100% of your money without any questions or delay.”
- **Use direct-response advertising.** Don’t waste money on ineffective advertising. Always make sure any advertising contains a compelling offer/benefit and motivates the reader/listener/viewer to take action. Never advertise just an image. Advertise only to sell something. Track the effectiveness of your ads to generate leads and/or sales. If the ads don’t seem to be working, kill them. Never advertise to merely satisfy your ego.
- **Consider using telemarketing.** Use it to develop leads for your salespeople or use telemarketers to follow-up a direct mail or advertising campaign. Even consider using telemarketing to follow up a sale to see if the person requires any additional help, advice, services or products (warranties, add-on products, additional levels of service, etc.) If you just cleaned the carpet in two rooms of a customer’s house, call up a week later and ask if they would want additional rooms to look as good and offer them a discount as inducement for taking immediate action.
- **Influence many people at once with special events/seminars.** Consider hosting educational events for customers, referral sources, and prospects. Consider holding them in conjunction with other companies (newspapers, radio stations, suppliers, banks, accounting firms, industry experts, trade associations, complementary companies, etc.). This will allow you to tap into their customer relationships. For example, if you are an upscale travel agency introducing new exotic trips, consider co-hosting an event with an upscale radio station, magazine or with a high-end jewelry store, auto dealership, country club, money management firm, etc.
- **Consider using direct mail.** Direct mail is simply putting a powerful and complete sales presentation in writing. Such a vehicle allows you to touch many buyers at once – immense leverage. Most owners would be best served in the long run by hiring a professional direct marketer on a project basis.
- **Consider using public relations.** Public relations can be a powerful source of leverage as you educate and influence a targeted audience about your benefits,

expertise, etc. Get to know the reporters in your industry and periodically call them with some story ideas.

- **Gain leverage by improving the effectiveness of your sales approach.** Give your sales people a proven, simple sales methodology. For example, use READ. **R**elate to your prospect. **E**stablish the Need/Problem. **A**dvance a Tailored Solution. **D**etermine Next Steps. It's all about building relationships and solving problems. Buy books, tapes, CDs on selling skills and distribute to your team. Also, periodically send your salespeople to strategic selling courses. Huge payoff!
- **Buy other reputable businesses** possessing great reputations and strong goodwill to gain access to their loyal customers. Be sure their business is a good fit for your company, culture, values, customer base, etc.