

Explode your profits with follow-up
marketing!



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4-Dimensional Success

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Explode your profits with follow-up marketing!

Let me ask a serious question? When you attend networking events – are you there to socialize or to be really serious about making profitable connections?



And... when you leave that networking event, are you honestly planning to go back to the office and follow up with the leads you take away?

Follow up, however, is not just limited to networking events. Take a look at your database of current and/or past clients. Whether you are working with valued clients, other business professionals or prospects, the one area where you can leave the most money on the table is in how aggressive you are with your follow up program.

I have learned that the process of public communication involves three major criteria: entertain, inform and educate. Therefore, my traffic flow, as such, will follow that sequencing.

Entertain

It is our responsibility to educate consumers, but some marketers forgot to check into cultural differences and experienced the following:

- ✓ An American T-shirt maker in Miami printed shirts for the Spanish market that promoted the Pope's visit. Instead of "I saw the Pope"

(el Papa); the shirts read "I saw the potato" (la papa).

- ✓ Pepsi's "Come alive with the Pepsi Generation" translated into "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the grave," in Chinese.
- ✓ Coors put its slogan, "Turn it loose," into Spanish, where it was read as "Suffer from diarrhea."
- ✓ When Gerber started selling baby food in Africa, they used the same packaging as in the U.S., with the beautiful baby on the label. Later they learned that in Africa, companies routinely put pictures on the label of what's inside, since most people can't read English.

Inform: Statistics ~ Did you know?

Is it really that important to follow up with prospects?

Many business owners appear to believe that it is not that important. Typically, when a request for information is received, most businesses quickly respond with a brochure or information package. Then they wait..... and wait..... and wait.

Until your prospect becomes your customer he is also the prospect of each and every competitor you have. He is even the prospect of competitors of which you are not aware. What you need to do is stand out in the mass of businesses trying to woo your prospect.

A simple follow up system is all that is needed to set your business apart from the rest. After all, you can

never know exactly where in the sales process your prospect is unless you stay in contact.

Don't stop the follow up when your prospect becomes a customer!

Statistics support:

The cost of acquiring a new customer is at least 8-10 times the cost of keeping an existing customer satisfied.

- ✓ According to The Harvard Business Review companies could increase profits by up to 85% simply by decreasing customer defection by 5%

Customer retention is about the most important thing your company can do and proper follow up is about the most important step in customer retention.

- ✓ It takes seven (7) follow-ups just to close a sale.
- ✓ Billions of business-to-business marketing dollars are spent each year on generating sales leads. Unfortunately, much of this investment is wasted. Why? Because many lead efforts are consistently, nor systematically followed.

But what a great opportunity for you... just follow-up with a prospect and you are ahead of 70% of the competition. Not bad for a little bit of the work.

Personal, consistent contact, otherwise known as **follow up** is the key.

- ✓ *According to the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®, 70 percent of homebuyers said they would use their real estate professional again. However, only 11 percent reported buying through the real*

estate professional they had used before. Why? Because clients haven't heard from them and they assume the agent didn't want to do business with them.

Why is it easier for you to finish a transaction and then attend various networking events to **find** new leads than to follow up with current and previous clients or with those leads you already have sitting in a drawer on your desk?

- ✓ Research shows that people do not fully pursue around 70% of leads generated by their expensive marketing efforts. That amounts to literally billions of wasted marketing dollars.

The speed of lead follow-up is a major contributor to this problem. According to a benchmark study of best practices, the conclusion was that, "Leads get cold quickly, so it is vital that vendors implement prompt, effective lead follow-up processes."

- ✓ One of the cases in the study showed a company that generates 12,000 inquiries per year – inquiries to which they have a corporate standard of responding to within four to eight hours.
- ✓ Management is very “unforgiving” if those responses are not made – understanding the direct link between the conversion rate and their success in remaining competitive with three Fortune 500 competitors who are 50 times their size.

One final thought, if you are only “seeking” rather than following up with your leads, you are just throwing a lot of your budget on the scrap heap.

- ✓ Statistics support that 30% - 45% of leads that are not ready “today” are sales ready

opportunities within 12-months. As a wise business owner, would you not rather spend more of your time “working” your business than “securing” new business leads?

Note a couple of other facts.

- ✓ *A study by Dr. Allen Konopacki revealed that 80% of your prospects are not ready to buy when you first meet.*
- ✓ *The Sales and Marketing Executives International reported that 80% of sales are made after the fifth contact with a prospect.*

Great even more opportunity! You can be the cream of the crop and turn more prospects into customers. Just follow-up with your prospects and then continue to stay in touch with your prospects

How To Increase Sales Up To 25% Or More! Call every prospect—those who have visited your location, phoned or visited – or expressed an interest at your networking events!

Client (Prospect) Expectations:

As a business owner yourself, you have certain expectations from the professionals with whom you come in contact. It is evident, then, your clients, prospects, and other professionals also feel that networking is more than handing out your business card.

The truth is, people buy when THEY want to buy, and that is not always when YOU want them to buy.

Follow-up. Be patient when you network. And don't forget to water the seeds you've planted. Follow-up!

The Problem – Networking Mistakes Diminish Sales Efforts.

Capturing Networking Leads

Making the most of your networking leads is crucial for maximum profitability. Too often, companies spend thousands—even millions—of dollars for lead generation programs without sparing a thought to how they will capture, process, and follow up the leads once they are acquired!

- ✓ Are you **capturing every networking lead**? (Are you sure?)
- ✓ Are your leads in a **clean, consistent format** you can use right now?
- ✓ Is **vital information you need** captured every time a new lead comes in: name, phone, email, company, interest level, etc.?
- ✓ Can you easily **assess the value of each networking lead**? Do you know which of your marketing programs **yield the highest value** customers and which yield the highest close rates?
- ✓ Can you **capture quality contact information** quickly and easily? Do you have the **right tools** to make this effortless?

Remember: People have short memories. **Follow-up regularly with members of your network** or they'll forget you exist and more importantly they'll forget that you are the best person to solve their financial, legal, human resource, design, or other problems. Contact the people in your network in some way at least once a month.

Tradeshows

Lets talk about tradeshows – another “networking” event:

Trade shows are the most cost-effective "face-to-face" marketing method available today. They allow an exhibitor to meet with hundreds of motivated potential customers. Unfortunately, too many exhibitors waste much of the potential marketing value because they don't following a few simple rules...

- ✓ Assume that your business card and brochure are in a plastic bag with 50 other companies on the floor in your prospect's office. He's in the same boat as you. He'll get to the plastic bag when he gets time, which turns out to be never, and three months later the entire contents go into the office-recycling bin.
- ✓ It IS possible to double or triple new customers from a trade show by doing one thing... follow-up. Call all of your prospects within 3 days of getting back to work. Write a personal note on the back of each prospect's business card so that you can mention it and show that you remember him.
- ✓ Don't stop with one call. Call back in two weeks, and then in a month. You aren't cold calling because you already know your prospect. Follow-up is more work, but with all the work you already invested in preparing for and going to the show, it's a waste to not finish the job. So remember... follow-up, follow-up, and follow-up!

Systems

The use of a “system” becomes a must have marketing tool that allows you to follow up quickly and/or automatically.

A well-designed “system” gives you the power of a full sales team – day-in and day-out – reminding your customers and prospects just how great you and your products really are!

That's right, small business marketing is a system...not an event. Most business owners fall prey to the "marketing idea of the week" and never seem to produce any significant marketing results with this chaotic approach to the most important facet of their business

Your small business-marketing program should be designed to treat marketing as an integrated system. At the core of the system is a series of steps and strategies, in various stages, which any business, regardless of size, can use to finally produce stunning returns from a consistent marketing effort.

A marketing plan is a simple (in many cases one page) document that specifically answers who you are, what you do, who needs it, how you plan to grab them by the throat, when you plan to do it and how you plan to pay for it...in a way that everyone in your organization, network, and client base can clearly understand.

Stay organized: The system you decide to use is not as important as remaining organized and consistently using it. As Louis Pasteur said 'Success favors the prepared mind'. Keeping yourself and your clients documents organized shows your professionalism.

Establish specific dates for follow-up and then stick to them. It's tempting to tell yourself: "I'll get to that next week." You might have the best intentions of following through, but you might get caught up in other business matters. Giving yourself a specific day to telephone a client or mail information will give you a short-term goal to meet.

Pick a time of day for each aspect of follow-up. Block off time for yourself that you will dedicate to making phone calls, meeting with clients, and mailing information. Phone calls are often best in the morning before your prospect's day has a chance to get hectic. Many business people often come to the office early and stay late, so off-hours are good times to phone. It's during off-hours that many key buyers and decision-makers answer their own phones; assistants and secretaries may not be in the office yet.

If you favor lunch meetings, it's important to remember that it's not always the most productive time to meet. If you have a complicated product or service to explain, a lunch meeting won't be the best atmosphere for a serious, focused discussion. Lunch meetings, because they lend a social aspect, are best in the beginning to help establish the relationship or later to maintain good client relations.

If you find writing a sales letter requires an enormous effort on your part, you may want to schedule time in the morning for that task, while you're still fresh.

You know when you work best and are the most productive, but you need to consider the time that is best for your client.

- ✓ A good time for Alex Printing to contact a book publisher isn't right before their biggest trade show.

- ✓ The sales manager for Party Planners might like to phone first thing in the morning, but if the prospect has a morning meeting everyday, she will have to adapt her schedule to fit the prospects.

Consider purchasing a daily planner to keep you organized. There are many computer programs available to help manage busy schedules. Develop a system for profiling and tracking your progress with all of your prospects. It doesn't have to be elaborate to be effective.

Suggestion: Create a customer sheet with space to record initial contact, follow-up efforts, special offers, and objections. Buy an inexpensive three-ring binder to store the profiles. At the end of the day, update entries and use it to plan for upcoming follow-up efforts.

Use this to supplement your traditional filing system. You can't keep all of your files on your desk, but a three-ring binder is a convenient method to summarize your files and to keep them at your fingertips.

Time Management/Automation:

Whether you are following up with phone calls, direct mail or email, there is no question about it, scheduled follow up produces tremendous results, time and time again.

Email

If email IS your choice of follow up marketing, make sure you tap into the value of Auto-Responders – the most powerful, time efficient marketing tool to ever hit the Internet.

- ✓ Unlimited follow up email responders for one low price.
- ✓ You can email to your list at anytime with important messages or announcements. This will not affect the automatic follow-up sequence.
- ✓ You can upload email list of unlimited size.
- ✓ You can collect demographics data to better target your market.
- ✓ You can configure your Demographic Questions and input the choice of answers that you will accept.
- ✓ Enter whatever demographics data you want to collect.

Live by a calendar

Determine what you need to do to follow up, and then schedule the appropriate activities in your calendar. Whatever it is that you need to do – make the genuine commitment to complete that action. The mistake most small business owners make is to get overwhelmed when they realize how much they really need to.

Stay Cool! And continue to schedule your follow up. You will find over the course of time that you will have a fully developed referral system, new website, and a lead generation system. Slow and steady wins the race - lil' tortoise.

Methods ~ It is NOT about YOU!

Sponsoring client appreciation events:

Clients go where they are invited, and they stay only where they are appreciated. Think about how you can

demonstrate to your clients how much they mean to you. By conducting special events activities for them and with them you transcend the financial only aspects of your relationship, and turn fundraising into friend-raising.

Build your own yellow pages

Be a resource to your clients by focusing on their lives as well as the products or services they buy.

- ✓ Develop a list of potential contacts in other areas of peoples' lives.
- ✓ Use the list to create a referral directory of services for your clients.
- ✓ Circulate the list with permission to your clients once per year.

Eventually you will see the list expand because of your conscious effort to create your own yellow pages for clients- you will find that once people find out about the list that they are not on, they will want to get on the list.

Direct Mail Follow-up:

The holy grail of marketing: send your prospect a glossy direct mail piece completely customized. Include their photo, a local map indicating a place of interest, and graphics and information uniquely tailored to their self-identified interests and preferences. Every mailer is completely unique, and the entire campaign is surprisingly affordable.

Photo Merchandise:

Put the consumer's photo and your marketing message on a t-shirt, a mouse pad, a poster, or other type of photo merchandise. Make a one-of-a-kind gift

that your prospect will continue to enjoy for a long time to come. These items can also be offered for sale on the photo page.

Creative Concept:

The sky's the limit when you combine the data gathered about your prospect, custom printing possibilities, and creativity. Put your prospect on the cover of an actual magazine, make a custom instant win card with their face on it, make a cardboard fold up toy customized using their personal content.

Don't Forget About Relationships

In this fast-paced world of e-commerce, e-trading and e-business, it's all too easy to get caught up in the technology.

- ✓ You can send a letter to someone across the country or around the world in a matter of seconds by e-mail.
- ✓ Many of us use a cell phone to call clients in between appointments.
- ✓ Web sites are the latest way to sell everything from software and toys to cars and now even real estate.

Electronic communication is without a doubt, a tremendous time-saver. After all, one of the most precious assets a real estate professional has is time. But it is important not to overlook the basic fundamentals of Personal or "P"-marketing - developing personal relationships.

P-marketing is at the very foundation of sales and marketing. In the old days, the only way to do business was with a handshake and a personal

relationship. Prospecting meant knocking on doors, sending letters and notes and meeting people for lunch. It took persistence and a commitment to spending time developing relationships with people.

P-marketing is also Permission Marketing. It means asking prospects for their permission to share your marketing message. Unlike interruption or mass marketing, permission marketing asks the prospect to participate in the sales process.

With their permission, you can count on their undivided attention and interest. An example of this is with the online bookseller, Amazon.com. When a customer purchases their first book with Amazon.com, they are asked to provide their e-mail address. If the customer joins any special interest groups or makes purchases in a particular category, Amazon.com uses that information to create unique marketing messages of interest to that customer.

Through permission marketing, Amazon.com sends regular e-mail updates on upcoming books and motivates past customers to visit their site again. Their targeted e-mail messages are personal, relevant and anticipated.

Developing personal relationships, like many things, requires a huge investment of your time and energy. It also demands an unwavering commitment to your beliefs. [E-mail and mass marketing should be a part of your overall plan, but they should not replace personal contact.](#)

Many times, we turn to shortcut methods to achieve our goals.

- ✓ You might send e-mail instead of writing a personal note or seeing someone in person.
- ✓ You might run a display ad rather than sending your customers a personal letter.

It is important to focus on building relationships. That requires planning, effort and time. You are not only trying to sell your services to your prospect, but also to their friends and family. You want to grow one relationship into many.

Technology should play an important role in your overall marketing program. But it should not work exclusively.

- ✓ E-mail is an excellent vehicle for Realtors delivering daily MLS listings to prospects.
- ✓ Your Web site is also a valuable tool for communicating your services, values and current product listings.

But all these things must work together with Personal and Permission marketing activities to maximize your sales efforts and grow your business.

Client Follow Up

Now that you have established a relationship with a client, let them know you consider them to be more than just a one-time customer. Invest in a client follow-up program to ensure consistent contact and caring. Client follow-up helps you:

- ✓ Show appreciation for your customers' business
- ✓ Maintain contact and strengthen relationships with your past clients
- ✓ Generate repeat business
- ✓ Increase your referrals

- ✓ Learn about your clients' future needs
- ✓ Express your professionalism

The answer to repeat business and referrals?

- ✓ Stay in touch consistently with something that has value today.
- ✓ Send short, upbeat, handwritten notes to everyone you met.
- ✓ Make follow-up phone calls to those individuals you desire to get better acquainted with, and schedule a time to meet with them.
- ✓ Document and track all your networking contacts using your contact database software program.

According to Aristotle, *“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”* Make networking a habit. It's sure to turn your business into gold – solid gold!

Once you have someone's business card, make sure you follow up with him or her within 24 hours of the event. If there's an obvious win-win connection with someone you've met at an event, call him or her up and invite him or her to lunch to explore the connection further.

When you write the networking event into your calendar, also add one or two hours the following day into your calendar for follow-up so that you know you have time to complete the task.

When you look upon networking events and business functions as an opportunity to meet new people, do some market research, and find potential clients, it can become a joy instead of a chore. Going in with a

game plan makes you feel like you can really make the most of the event.

Once the event is over, your **networking** doesn't stop! Be sure to **follow** up with those you've met, keep in contact, share information ...

How to Follow-Up on a Prospect

A comprehensive follow-up plan not only requires strategic planning but a complete understanding of your target market and the entire sales process as well. You will also need to know how to implement various communication tools in your follow-up effort, such as sales brochures, sales letters, and public relation vehicles.

What To Expect

Follow-up is a critical component of the sales process, as well as an important element of on-going customer development. The information in this Business Builder will explain how to create and execute an effective follow-up plan that will increase your sales as well as maintain and expand your client base.

What You Should Know Before Getting Started

Follow-up is an on-going aspect of most sales efforts. It specifically refers to each step taken beyond the initial contact with the prospect, or potential client. Whether initial contact was made by mail, phone, or in-person, any subsequent contact is follow-up.

For What Types of Business Should Follow-Up be Employed?

Most prospects need little time to consider the merits of an inexpensive purchase since little money is

involved. The risk for the buyer is minimal and therefore, little, if any, follow-up will be required to close a sale. Certain types of sales, however, will require extensive follow-up efforts since prospects will take more time to consider them:

- ✓ **High Priced Items:** It's almost unheard of for a person to buy a new car quickly. Most consumers will conduct extensive research, visit several dealers, and agonize greatly over choosing a new car. That's because it's a major expenditure. Smart businesses are like smart consumers. They will shop around to try to get the best price and service possible before committing to any significant expenditure.
- ✓ **Luxury Items:** Vacation homes and gold watches, while desirable and appealing to everyone, can be a tough sell. A sales person has to not only overcome objections to the high prices of such items, but they have to overcome the obstacle that they represent unnecessary purchases.
- ✓ **New Technology:** New computers and machinery that employ new technologies often employ high price tags. They're also perceived as risky purchases because the track record for their use is not well established. Plus, people rarely make quick decisions about things they don't understand.
- ✓ **Services:** Since services are less tangible than physical products, they are often harder to sell. It can take a lot of convincing and follow-up on the part of a consulting company to make a sale. A product can be seen, touched, and judged on the spot, but a

service can only be explained or imagined. That's why prospects may delay the decision to buy.

How Much Time is Involved in Sales Follow-Up?

Follow-up isn't a scientific process that can be measured. Sometimes it can involve several mailings, phone calls, and business meetings to close just one sale. Other times, one phone call and one office visit is sufficient follow-up for making a deal.

Some sales people work on getting accounts for months and even longer. It will depend on how tough your product or services are to sell. The length of follow-up will also depend on how much of a commitment you're willing to make to developing and maintaining your client base.

Process Of Preparing A Follow-Up Plan

Establish Your Objectives

Before you begin you must answer two important questions:

Who is my prospect and how badly do I want their business?

Understanding your target market is the most basic ingredient to effective follow-up. During all of your contact with your prospect, you will have to convince them your product offers them a benefit they want and need. You will also have to anticipate what their objections will be to your product or service and be prepared to overcome them.

For example: You're a new printer, Alex Printing Company, targeting small book publishing companies. You're competition is foreign printers. You've established that your target market cares mostly about cost, but they also care a great deal about getting a quick turn-around for their orders — book publishers may have a run-away bestseller and need to get more copies fast. You can't compete with foreign pricing, but you can beat your competitions' turn-around by three months.

Alex Printing's Benefit: The benefit your target market wants and needs is the ability to produce books quickly. This will be the heart of your sales effort.

Your Prospect's Main Objection: Your service is too expensive.

Your Counterpoint: Not if you consider that your inventory will be on a boat from Asia for at least six weeks. If I were your printer, your books would be in the stores right now. Your shipping costs from Asia must be extraordinary as well.

Write down your product or service's main benefits:

Anticipate your prospect's main objection and overcome it.

You must determine how badly you want a prospect's business because you must decide exactly what you're willing to do to get it. Special offers, price discounts, anything you do to provide incentive for your prospect to make a decision to buy will become a strategic consideration of your follow-up.

Because this publisher could become a major account, Alex Printing Company may decide to offer them free freight for the first 10,000 books they print, or offer a special price break on printing 5,000 copies instead of the usual 10,000. Putting a limit on this

offer will help move the follow-up process along by establishing a sense of urgency in the book publisher's mind. That's why you must always put a specific limit on the life of any offer or incentive — "Offer good to January 1."

How much time will you devote to following-up with any one prospect?

Again, you must decide how important a potential client is to your business and determine how much time you will invest to try to get it. You will be taking time away from other prospects to ardently pursue one account.

Making this determination will depend on:

- ✓ How much prestige the account will generate for you. Someone established and respected in their field can be a valuable referral and help you generate new accounts.
- ✓ How much business volume the client offers. Is this book publisher going to give Alex Printing 10% or 50% of their printing business? The answer will help dictate how much effort should be made to close the sale.
- ✓ Where the prospect is located. If you can visit a client's office easily for meetings, your follow-up won't be as burdensome as it would be if the prospect were located in a different city.

Develop a Sales Follow-Up Plan

What's the most effective way for you to communicate with a prospect on an on-going basis? Though it

varies from company to company, three factors are common in developing any follow-up plan:

- ✓ **Decide on Your Sales Approach.** It's standard operating procedure to first generate sales leads, then to cold call or telephone the prospect. It's also typical for many companies to mail the prospect information first before telephoning, in which case the phone call becomes the follow-up. Which is better? Again, there's no fixed rule. Whatever the system, if it works it's a good system. If you're not certain about which method is best, mailing a sales letter with supporting material first can help your follow-up efforts by:
 - ✓ **...building credibility.** If a prospect has never heard of you, they may not take your call. If they do take your call, they may think, "Who is this guy promising to print my books in four weeks?" Mailed material helps bridge this gap. It conveys your image to the prospect. Your letterhead and logo, your writing style, your sales materials all communicate who you are to the prospect.
 - ✓ **...overcoming a prospect's objection.** If you mailed a sales letter, the follow-up call is likely to last longer than if you didn't mail anything first. That's because the person is likely to tell a sales rep, "I'm very busy. Why don't you send me something in the mail?" You can counter by saying that you already have sent something in the mail. It helps buy you time on those tricky first phone calls.
 - ✓ **...getting you noticed.** If your sales letter gets lost on a prospect's desk, you can tell them on your follow-up that you've sent a

sales letter or informational material. It increases the chances that they will seek out your material and read it.

Identify Your Prospect

How you should make initial contact and how much time you should plan to spend on follow-up will depend on the potential customer.

- ✓ **...personal contact.** If you've met your potential client at a trade show or cocktail party, it will be easier for you to get an appointment with them. Any positive, personal contact helps establish relationships and moves follow-up along. If your initial contact is in-person, following-up with a phone call is highly appropriate.
- ✓ **...referral.** If one of your existing clients recommends you to a client or associate, moving to close a sale will take fewer follow-ups because you've already overcome a sense of risk on the prospect's part. Your initial contact is likely to be a telephone call and your follow-up will be in the form of meetings.
- ✓ **...existing customer.** If you are trying to get an existing customer to increase his business, your follow-up will be highly personal since you already have an established relationship.
- ✓ **...former customer.** If you're trying to win back a former customer, especially if there were problems with the account, you should plan on spending a lot of time on follow-up. Building trust is one of the key elements of a good sales relationship and one of the goals of any follow-up campaign.

- ✓ **...new prospect.** Even if the lead is a qualified one, new prospects require the most effort and take the most time for follow-up. If there's no relationship, one will have to be developed over time.

Think about your approach — how you will make your initial client contact, then how you will follow-up.

For example, suppose you're a company called Party Planners, and you provide corporate catering and party planning services.

You have two potential clients: Client A is a referral, client B a new prospect. You telephone the referral and mail a sales letter and brochure to the new prospect.

Your approach for Company A: Telephoned September 2; follow-up meeting on September 12.

Your approach for Company B: Mailed sales information September 1. Will follow-up by telephone on September 9. Will offer free hors d' oeuvres for ten people if they sign by October 1.

Execute Your Plan

Whether you choose to phone your client, write a letter, or meet in-person, make sure each client contact yields the maximum advantage.

Sales Letters

The purpose of a sales letter is...to communicate your product or service's benefit.

For example, Party Planners will emphasize cost effectiveness and time savings in their sales letters...to overcome your prospect's objections. If, when speaking with a prospect, Party Planners met

with the objection, "Why should I pay you to plan our office Christmas party when my secretary can do it for free," their sales letter would overcome this objection. For example:

"When we spoke, you mentioned that your secretary usually plans your office parties. Planning an office party takes a lot of concentrated effort. That means instead of tending to her daily work load she must call restaurants and caterers...."

Move the closing process forward by making a limited special offer. For example:

"If you agree to let Alex Printing print your next book, we'll give you free freight from our plant to your warehouse. This offer is available only to new customers who contract with us by November 15."

Follow these general guidelines for creating effective sales letters:

If your initial contact was a face-to-face meeting, don't use a headline. A headline on your sales letter will depersonalize your communication. Remember, follow-up builds a personal relationship.

State your strongest benefit in your lead paragraph. Your potential clients want to know what you can do for them. Your lead paragraph should be compelling. You need to grab your reader's attention. Asking a question, creating a scenario, telling your reader important information they may not know are all effective ways to start your sales letter.

Wrong: "Alex Printing Company is founded on the principle that quality comes first. Established in 1999, we've doubled our sales in the last year alone."

Right: "Your new author just appeared on *Oprah*. Now, her book is selling like hotcakes. Your phone is ringing off the hook; your customers want more

copies. Unfortunately, you have to wait three months to fill your back orders because this book is printed in Hong Kong. Maybe you should consider a local printer who can get your book to you in three weeks."

Right: "Would you like greater control over your inventory? Alex Printing can help you do this and save you thousands of dollars a year in overseas shipping expenses."

Offer proof of what you're saying to eliminate risk. Testimonials, product reviews, and endorsements should be used in your sales letter whenever possible.

Tell the reader what your next follow-up move will be. For instance, will you be sending a product sample or calling next week to schedule an appointment? Don't leave your subsequent client contact up to the prospect. Prospects rarely follow-up with sales people, especially in the beginning of the follow-up process.

Telephone Calls.

Whether it's your second call to a client or your tenth, the principles of good phone follow-up always apply.

Always ask the prospect if it's a convenient time to talk. If the prospect is rushed, on deadline, or late for a meeting, don't try to keep him on the phone. Ask when a better time to phone them would be. Again, don't leave it up to them to call you back.

Never stop reinforcing benefits and meeting objections. Once you have a good rapport with a prospect, it's easy to forget that you need to constantly remind them of your product's benefits.

If your first follow-up attempt is a telephone call don't say: "This is Bob Alex from Alex Printing. I sent you a letter and a sales brochure last week, did you get it?"

Nothing is more irritating to a potential customer than this question. Chances are, your prospect's desk is loaded with similar letters. You've made a bad and ineffective first impression. A better way to start a follow-up conversation would be, "This is Bob Alex from Alex Printing. I'd like to briefly tell you how our company could help you get books in the store when you need them there. Do you have a minute?"

If the prospect says "no," don't force it. Ask when a better time to phone is, and let them know you sent them information last week in the mail.

Face-to-face meetings.

If you're following-up in person, even if you can't close the sale, you have an opportunity to gather information that will help you build the relationship.

Listen. Many sales people make the mistake of talking too much. Your prospect is the single greatest source of information to move you towards a successful close.

Be patient. Don't try to get the prospect to sign on the dotted line after one meeting. That simply may not be possible in all sales situations. Even if you can't close, an in-person meeting is an excellent opportunity to gather ammunition for a subsequent follow-up:

Find out what product or service the prospect is currently using. Ask them what they like and don't like about it. This will help you identify which benefits are most important to them.

Ask them how their decision-making process works. This will point you to other people in the company who should receive information about your product or service.

Determine what your obstacles to closing will be in the future. This will give you more time to prepare your strategy for overcoming objections.

Some final thoughts about networking follow-up:

- ✓ **Be flexible.** You might have to change your follow-up strategy as you go. Build on your successes. For example, if you've determined that your sales letter is more effective when it contains supplemental information, you should include a sales brochure in all your mailings. You may also find that some of your sales letters are effective and some aren't. Study them and try to determine why. Some special offers work better than others. Identify the winners and use them whenever possible.
- ✓ **Be prepared to act quickly.** Sometimes you think the follow-up process might take months, and then to your surprise the prospect decides to buy. If you were expecting to generate an order for 10,000 books in May, and you get the order in February, you might have a big problem. Always be prepared for the unexpected.
- ✓ **Don't follow-up excessively.** Don't telephone your potential client twice a day, and don't inundate them with literature about your company. You will become a pest. Give a prospect time to receive material, consider it, and go through their own company purchasing channels. Use your common sense as you establish a balance between calling too much and not calling enough. Think how you would feel about a sales person calling you frequently.

- ✓ **Know when to quit.** You can't follow-up forever, and you will not be able to close every sale. Trust your instincts. If they're telling you, "this company is never going to make a decision," then chances are they won't. The follow-up process in the next section of this Business Builder will advise you on how to maintain contact after you determine to end the sales follow-up process.

Develop an On-Going Follow-Up Plan

If you make a sale, follow-up continues. Once a prospect buys your product or service and becomes a customer, you will need to solve any problems that may arise to get them to continue to use your product and service on a regular basis.

But even if you don't close a sale, you can still employ a follow-up plan to maintain contact with a prospect with the goal of someday turning them into a client. When you can no longer afford the time it takes to telephone, write sales letters, or visit a prospect, follow the guidelines outlined below for continuing the

- ✓ **Build Your Mailing List.** When you determine that you will not be able to close a sale or if the prospect buys from your competitor, add that person's name to your follow-up list. You might already have a system in place to execute mailings to your existing customers and new prospects. You might be sending them new sales literature, clips of articles about your company, or favorable product reviews. Why not send them to your prospects as well? Maintaining contact will keep your name and your product or service in their minds and at some point, if they become dissatisfied with

your competitor, they might consider buying from you.

It's likely that you're already employing several key tools essential to an on-going follow-up effort for other purposes. This means you can increase the cost-effectiveness of producing each one by further employing it as a sales tool. The following are sales and promotional tools you can employ in your follow-up:

- ✓ **Press Releases.** A press release is primarily sent to the media in hopes of getting them to write about or feature your company or product. Because a press release contains new or newsworthy information, it's also appropriate to send to prospects.

For example: Two years after a prospect turned down Alex Printings' sales offer, the company developed a new printing press that doubled the amount of books they could print at once. When the old prospect reads the press release, they'll get the message that not only is Alex Printing growing, but their technology and service is improving as well.

- ✓ **Company Newsletters and tip sheets.** The purpose of a company newsletter or tip sheet is to provide information about a company or its products. When used most effectively, these communication vehicles contain information that a prospect may find helpful.

For example: Party Planners publishes a two-page tip sheet four times a year. It offers suggestions to corporations on how to save money when planning office parties. Not only is this a good public relations tool, it also establishes Party Planners as knowledgeable experts.

- ✓ **Sales Brochures.** As your company grows, you will create new sales brochures. Sending a sales brochure will inform your old prospects about your new products, product improvements, and new features.
- ✓ **Publicity.** Anytime your product is reviewed in a publication or an article is written about you or your company, you should mail your prospect a copy. Clip the review or article and paste neatly onto your letterhead and have it copied. Publicity is an excellent endorsement.
- ✓ **Holiday Cards.** Add old prospects to your holiday mailing list. Cards that are preprinted don't even require a signature, but lets the prospect know you're still thinking of them.

Personalize your follow-up when time allows.

- ✓ Tell the prospect what's new with your company or product. Consider generating a sales letter or telephoning an old prospect every six months or so. This is especially important if you have a new product, new feature, or are employing a new technology. Keeping the prospect informed may open up a new sales opportunity.
- ✓ Ask the prospect what's new with his/her company or product. Understanding the changes they've experienced recently might give you an idea on how to sell them your product or service.

CHECKLIST

Establish Objectives

- Understand your market.
- Determine how much you want a prospect's business.
- Construct an offer.
- Limit the offer
- Determine how much time you can afford to spend pursuing a prospect.

Develop a Sales Follow-Up Plan

- Determine your initial contact.
- Consider the advantages of mailing first.
- Evaluate the type of prospect you're dealing with.
- Organize
- Establish dates for follow-up.
- Establish times for follow-up.
- Create a system for tracking your follow-up progress.

Implement Your Follow-Up Plan.

- Write effective sales letters.
- How to follow-up by phone.
- Make the most of meetings.

Develop a Plan for On-Going Follow-Up

- Create a mailing list.
- Employ sales and promotional material.
- Personalize your effort when time permits.

Follow Up, Follow Thru

Now that you have spent time uncovering new business contacts, you must develop a plan on cultivating them. Without a plan, the business cards you have collected will “pile up”, and the strength of your introduction will fade fast. Here are some suggestions after you return to the office:

1. Save the card

Enter the business card into your database ASAP. Include notes from your conversation. Be sure to include where you met the individual, who might have introduced you, and the date of the event.

2. Make the contact

Send a personalized email or note card. DO NOT solicit this person with company material, or an offering in your correspondence. The point is to continue to establish rapport.

3. Follow up

In a few business days, contact the individual. If you must leave a message, include items from your original conversation.

4. Follow thru

If you have not heard from this person, either by phone or email, place a second call. Utilize this opportunity to express your interest in meeting.

5. Make the 'cut'

Still no contact? If not, DUMP the business card. It is obvious that this individual does not consider you to be a relevant instrument to their success. Don't waste your time trying to convince them otherwise!

Perseverance

Though *Networking For Professionals* vastly enhances your odds of receiving positive responses, building rewarding relationships can take time. You may be lucky and develop a strong and lucrative relationship with the first person you meet. Conversely you may send out several emails before you get an interested reply and it may take you several meetings with different professionals before you find someone you are comfortable developing a relationship with. If you meet with some initial resistance, don't be discouraged. Persevere and you will ultimately be successful. It is equally important that you stay committed to the networking process if you meet with success early on. Remember that one great relationship is not enough as circumstances can change quickly. The only way to protect your business against the effects of a naturally diminishing referral base is to keep expanding your network.

Follow Up

Building trust in a relationship takes time and requires follow up with the professional concerned and the clients you refer to that professional. After referring someone to another professional always follows up with that person to find out if they were happy with the services they received. This establishes trust with the person who will remember that you cared enough to call and provides you with invaluable feedback on the business practices of that professional with whom you are building a relationship. Hearing positive feedback about that professional builds trust in that relationship. The process of building trust in your professional

relationships and establishing a history of mutual assistance is critical to your success in networking.

Maintaining communication with professionals with whom you establish a connection is also crucial. Through regular and consistent follow up you can stay updated on their changing needs and goals and remind them of your own. Often you will find that you call someone for one reason and end up receiving valuable information concerning something else that you would not have obtained otherwise.

Follow up – Every letter and meeting requires extensive follow up. You cannot expect business executives to track you down. Calling or sending follow-up letters is a must. Common courtesies such as a call to confirm an appointment and thank you note are appropriate. In thank you letters, refer to specific information or assistance the contact contributed to you.

On-going contact – Stay in touch with your contacts on a regular basis. You'll often find that "old" contacts have new suggestions. When you complete your search, reconnect with all of your contacts, thanking them and informing them of your success. Nurturing these contacts can only enhance your network, which may be needed again in the future.

So you made some great new contacts at last night's networking party. Follow up, already! If you want to receive calls or emails, then you have to send some.

Secure follow-up instructions right away. When you first meet a contact or apply for a position, mention when you will contact them next. Write in your cover letter when you will call. Tell people you have just met when they can expect to hear from you.

Take any leads a networking contact gives you.

Say your friend gives you a lead for a job you're overqualified for that doesn't pay enough. Call the job lead anyway. Your friend might find out if you didn't and think you don't appreciate her help. She may think you're not taking her leads seriously, or that you are no longer job searching—which could result in her not giving you leads anymore. Just because you aren't impressed with one job lead doesn't mean you won't be impressed with the next. Make sure you get the next one.

Contact anyone who serves as a reference for you. Whether you are offered the position or not, if you want to use them as a reference again you need to keep them informed of your job search status.

The sooner the better. If someone emails or calls, respond to the message the same day. When you meet someone new, call the next day. If you went to an interview, send a thank-you letter within 24 hours, and include instructions as to when you will follow up

[The real benefits come from how well you follow up.](#)

Early in my networking life, I treated it like a sport.

I would score a point for every business card I collected, bounce from person to person like a point guard and admire my stack of cards like personal trophies in a trophy case.

Weeks later, I would pick up those business cards and shuffle through them in utter confusion, wondering who these people were and why they should be important to me.

I soon learned that, while networking is about building relationships and helping others as well as yourself reach personal and professional goals, the real results come from how well you follow up with people and ask for what you need.

Here are some techniques I've discovered that can be used to follow up for the best results:

Treat business cards like \$100 bills

Many people make the mistake of thrusting their business cards into someone's hands before they even know the person's name.

I don't.

Instead, I ask questions. Only if there's a mutual benefit to developing the relationship do I exchange cards. I treat my own business cards like \$100 bills.

I take only about 10 cards with me to any networking event. Doing this forces me to "spend" each business card wisely.

Remember something special about everyone

A man I met just before the Christmas holidays at a networking event mentioned his upcoming Valentine's Day wedding.

I didn't see him again until the spring but I recalled his nuptials and asked about the wedding. He was surprised that I even remembered.

More importantly, my good memory resulted in a job lead.

One strategy to help remember special things: Write down four things about the person on the back of the business card you collect -- the date you met, the place you met, an action you need to take and something interesting stemming from your conversation.

Three strikes and you're out

I only try to contact a person three times before giving up.

For my first follow-up, I always use e-mails and send it within 24-hours of meeting a person.

I say how nice it was to make their acquaintance and remind them what event we met at. Then, I recount something humorous or special about our conversation.

I end the e-mail with an action item for my lead to follow up on. It might be arranging a meeting date or reminding him or her to send me a report we were chatting about.

A week later, if I haven't received a response to my e-mail, I follow up with a phone call.

Before I call, I always write a script. That way, I can leave a brief and succinct message. The last thing I want to do is ramble on about the weather.

About two weeks after that, I send my last e-mail. If, after this third attempt, I don't get a response, I consider the lead to be cold. At that point, I expend my energy on relationships that show more potential for profitable response.

Forgive and forget

Do you remember how you felt when someone took one month to answer your e-mail? You were probably upset, feeling as if you were brushed off.

Put those feelings aside. Remember that other people have more and more on their plates. Most people will do what they need to according to their own priorities, so patience is the key.

When someone finally connects with me, I don't look to how long it took him or her to get back to me. Rather, I focus on being positive and cheerful. I gush about how glad I am that we're finally connecting and I get to the reason why I wanted to chat in the first place.

Instead of wasting energy fuming over what wasn't, focus on the fact that you have the person's attention now.

Continue to build rapport

Every couple of months, I send leads something that relates to their interests and hobbies, whether it's a website address where they'll find interesting information or an article likely to appeal to them. I also try to remember an upcoming milestone in their life.

My goal is to share in their personal successes to continue building a relationship.

Learning how to network effectively is a useful skill. But knowing how to follow up is what has really helped open doors and close deals.

Because I do it well, I never have to cold call. And I have built a network I can tap into when I need to.

I'm no longer a point guard with very little direction. I'm now a star player with a game plan in hand.

Final Supporting Statistics

- ✓ A referral generates 80% more results than a cold call.
- ✓ Approximately 70% of all leads are found through Networking.
- ✓ Most people you meet have around 200 contacts.

"The image you project, in many circumstances, is far more valuable than your skills or your record of past accomplishments" - Quote from University of Success.

The price your customer paid will be long forgotten, but the quality of the service they received will be remembered forever.

Following up with your prospects is the key to closing sales, in any business!

Remember - The fortune is in the follow-up!

"Encouraging you to engage in positive activities that will provide life-altering changes that will ensure long-term, sustainable benefit."

Anna Weber

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