



CARDINAL
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10 SUREFIRE WAYS TO INCREASE SALES

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Introduction

One of the most important activities of any business is to constantly find ways to increase sales. Even when companies are achieving record sales, they must prepare their sales pipeline and their sales strategies for future growth.

Whether your business is booming and you are simply looking for ways to continue your current pattern of success or you have room for improvement with your current sales techniques, here are 10 surefire ways to build your pipeline, improve your marketing and increase sales.

1. Do a "Back to Basics" Marketing Review.

Sometimes businesses are so focused on the daily activities prescribed by pre-established business and marketing plans that they lose touch of the cornerstones of any successful marketing strategy. Take some time to answer the following questions that form the key to a back to basics marketing review:

- (1) Who is my target audience?
- (2) What are their key concerns and needs?
- (3) How does my product solve those challenges?
- (4) What is the best way to reach those people?

Sometimes we fall in love with our products and *our* reasons that prospects should buy that we actually neglect *their* true concerns. For example, I once worked with a software manufacturer whose marketing materials focused on the endless features and functions that were better than the competition's. However, marketing research revealed that what prospects really wanted was software that was easy to use. The constant focus on complicated features actually alienated the target market. A back to basics marketing review helped align the firm's marketing with what customers actually wanted and helped dramatically increase sales.

2. Expand Your Internal Sales Force.

Who's the most effective salesperson in your company? It may be the CEO, your top producing sales reps, or your receptionist. Yes, the receptionist. Many firms overlook some of their best human resources when it comes to sales. Receptionists, secretaries and other employees in customer facing-roles have a bigger impact on your sales than you think. Need proof? Have you ever heard anyone ask, "Would you like fries with that?" That simple question turns millions of order-takers at fast-food restaurants into revenue generating salespeople. How can you do that for your organization? Make sure that everyone in the organization understands the value that you provide to the marketplace and can identify basic opportunities to share that value with customers.

3. Provide more value more often.

Staying in touch with clients and prospects is essential to increasing sales, but how do you make sure that constant contact doesn't become counterproductive? The answer is to ensure that each time you reach out, you provide something of value, whether it's an article, useful tips or helpful industry information. People may resist a sales pitch, but no one has a problem receiving useful information. Ask yourself, "How can I offer more value to my customers?" and "How can I improve the service I'm already providing?"

Each quarter, my accountant sends a regular mailing with updates to tax laws and helpful tricks to make the tax preparation process less stressful (and less expensive). I equate hearing from him with saving money and have come to look forward to it. When you provide value, your customers actually want to hear from you and are more receptive to additional offers or requests that you do make. Also, it solidifies your role with clients as a trusted advisor. The more clients think of you as part of their team, the more they will include you in diagnosing and treating what ails them.

4. Share Your Successes.

Everyone wants to be part of a winning team, including your clients and prospects. The book Made to Stick cites the example of SafeExpress, a family-owned shipping company in India that wanted to increase sales locally to firms that were not accustomed to paying higher rates for shipping and distrusted SafeExpress' claims of secure, on-time delivery. To win new business, SafeExpress touted its success with other important, security-sensitive projects: safely delivering the fifth *Harry Potter* book to thousands of locations across India at a specific time without allowing the early leak of a single book. For SafeExpress, sharing their successes with prospects allowed them to gain new business. Can you do the same? Case studies, testimonials and inserting client success stories in your sales presentations are simple ways to share your successes.

5. Shift Your Focus from "Fixing Problems" to "Continuing Success."

One of my great epiphanies occurred when I attended the Million Dollar Consulting College with my mentor Alan Weiss. He admonished us to never assume that our prospects are damaged and in need of fixing, but rather to focus on how to take strong customers and make them stronger. This simple shift in thinking can have amazing results. Evaluate how you're positioning yourself and your solutions and see if the way you are positioning your services actually limits your market. After all, strong companies are always interested in improving and often have better cash flow and resources than those that are struggling. And other companies will be less likely to reject your solutions out of hand if you address them from a position of strength.

6. Customize Your Offering.

Are you using a “one-size-fits-all” model to market your business to distinct audiences? Look at each of your target audiences and make sure that you’ve segmented them properly. Even if they appear to be a homogenous group at first glance, dig deeper to see if they have distinct needs. Then, look at the current messaging for your service and make sure it hits the needs of each specific group. Every year, the best-selling book is one in which the text doesn’t really change: the Bible. While the text itself doesn’t change significantly, the marketing does. There are editions that look like comic books or fashion magazines that share self space with ornate Bibles that would be at home on the shelf of a 15th century monastery. The content is important, but the packaging changes for each audience. Are there opportunities to take what you have and customize it for different markets?

7. Tell Everyone You Know What You Do.

It’s amazing how many people skip this simple, yet fundamental step. Have you told everyone you know (and by extension everyone your employees know) what you do? Many people are reluctant to share information about their businesses with close friends and colleagues leaving a wealth of untapped potential sales opportunities.

I recently had lunch with an acquaintance from a civic group who casually asked about my business. Once she learned about my services, she said the worst thing anyone could have said to me: “I wish you would’ve called me last year.” My friend had both a need and a budget for my services and would have been thrilled to know more about my business. I will not make that mistake again and I hope you learn from my error. When you have good information to share, you tell everyone. Why not extend the same courtesy to your business?

8. Tell Everyone *Everything* That You Do.

Sometimes businesses are victims of their own success and are known in the marketplace for one service that they provide particularly well, to the exclusion of others that they provide. This is especially true with clients who only focus on the one service they receive and may not think to ask you what you do. I once received a phone call from a marketing client asking me to recommend a keynote speaker for an industry conference. My client had no idea thought I was joking when I said that I could do the speech. Because he only interacted with me in one way, he did not know that he had other business needs that I could fill.

Make sure that you constantly educate your clients about additional services. You can do this formally through regular client communications and updating your marketing materials or informally by casually mentioning other services when you speak with clients. You should also make sure that friends, family and prospects have a clear idea of all your services as well. Your clients win because they save time and hassle getting new services and you win because you’ve acquired a new sales with zero acquisition cost.

9. Make it Easy to Do Business With You.

Be a secret shopper for your business and go through the process of investigating, purchasing and using your product as if you were a customer. Is the process simple? Is it seamless? Pay special attention to how easy it is to contact you and how easy it is to pay for the product. I once tried to order a product online, but there wasn't a "buy now" button, so after five minutes trying, I simply gave up. Similarly, I once pledged a charitable contribution to my local NPR station. When I received the pledge slip to return with my check, there was no return address or return envelope. Even though I wanted to pay, it took months before I found time to sort everything out.

It is your job to make it easy for people to work with you. Do a quick process review and make sure that you are not inadvertently driving customers away.

10. Ask for Referrals.

Would you like a steady stream of prequalified leads? Ask for referrals...regularly. If you don't have a mechanism in place to regularly ask existing customers and prospects for referrals, create one immediately. If you already do this, make sure the process is ongoing and seamless. Set a regular schedule to ask for referrals and adhere to it. Pretty soon, clients will proactively start to prospect for you in anticipation of your call. And, make it a practice to ask for referrals even from prospects that do not do business with you. If you have done a good job providing service, most prospects will not hesitate to share with you others whom you might help, as long as you *ask*.

Conclusion

Implementing even one of these steps can have a significant impact on your business growth. If you follow all ten steps, you will be on track to improve your marketing, build your pipeline and dramatically increase your sales and grow your business.

About Our Organization

Sales and marketing expert Chakisse Newton specializes in business development strategy, branding, communications and improving client relationships. Her services include consulting, coaching, keynotes and workshops. For more information or to sign up for our newsletter, visit www.cardinalconsulting.net or call 803-753-1311.

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