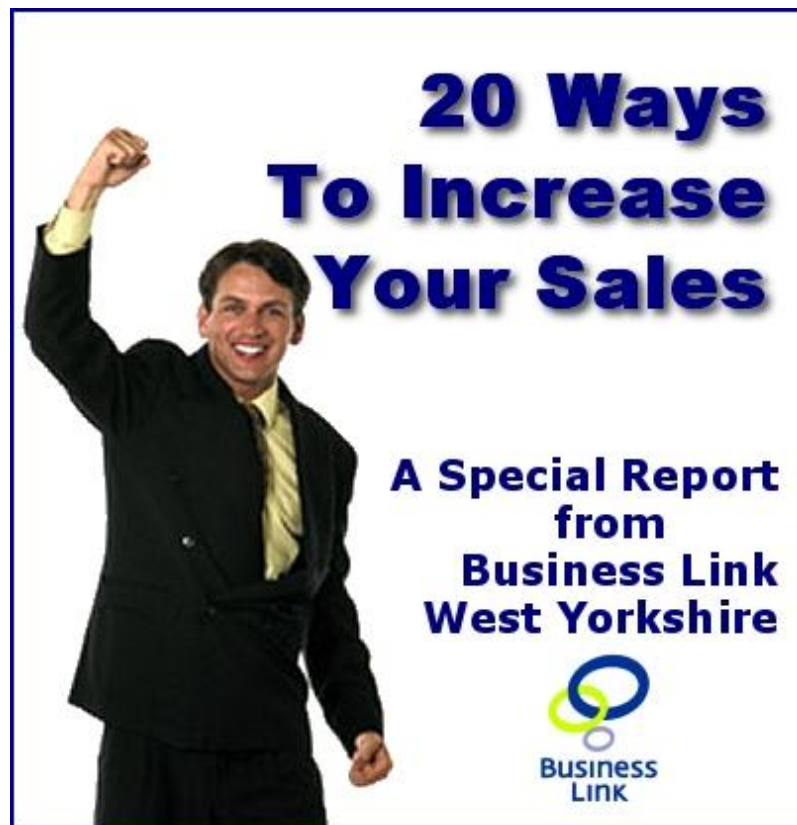


## **20 Ways To Increase Your Sales**



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# 20 Ways To Increase Your Sales

## Introduction

Welcome to "20 Ways To Increase Your Sales". This is a unique collection of articles contributed by leading sales and marketing people world-wide – so there may not always be a UK flavour to them!

Not all the techniques and ideas presented here will be appropriate, so you will need to be selective.

But don't dismiss *any* of the ideas too quickly. If, at first sight, a technique does not seem to be right for you and your business, think creatively and see if you can adapt it to *your* business and *your* products and services.

### How to use this e-book

Something like 85% of people who download free information from the Web fail to even read the document in full.

Don't make this mistake – there's a lot of valuable information here.

Perhaps the easiest way to read "20 Ways.." is to print it out. That way you can read it anywhere and make notes on the document.

If you *are* reading this on screen, you can more rapidly to any article by clicking on its title on the contents page.

### More information..

There is a lot more information on the Business Link West Yorkshire website:

<http://www.blwy.co.uk>

You will need to register (for free) on the site to get access to our Article Bank, but this is a quick process and well worth while. In addition to reading articles, you can also download excellent 4-page guides on over 200 business topics. Check out these "Directors Briefings" and "Start-up Briefings"!

# 20 Ways To Increase Your Sales

## 1. Increase Your Sales With Targeted Marketing

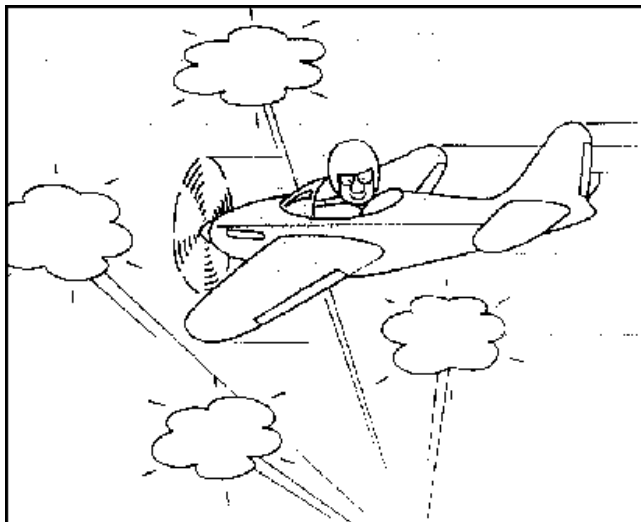
### What is targeted marketing

Targeted marketing is, according to the text books, "*the process of distinguishing the different groups that make up a market, and developing appropriate products and marketing mixes for each target market involved.*"

One of the curses of today's technology-driven advertising media (and that includes the Internet) is that it is relatively easy to blanket very wide sectors of the population with your promotional message, in the hope that some of the flying bullets will find their mark. This is not only wasteful of your resources (and other people's), but it can also work against your image. Probably well over half of the 'direct' mail sent out today deserves the title 'junk' mail, because that's precisely what it is. Why is it junk?

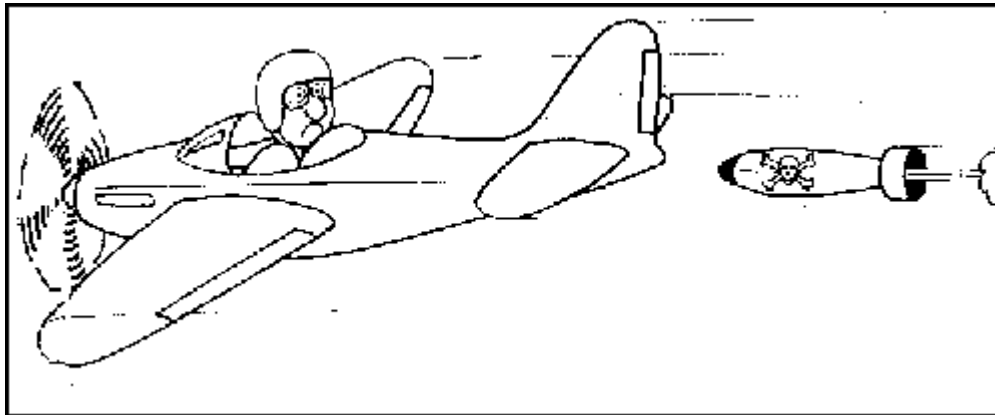
- It doesn't reach the right people - people who are genuine prospects
- It doesn't communicate well - it makes it difficult for the reader to absorb the message
- It's incorrectly addressed (which infuriates most people)
- It doesn't attempt to address the *real* needs of the reader

It's a bit like the old way of shooting down an enemy aircraft. When the target is sighted, round after round of air-burst high explosive is shot in the general direction of the target in the hopes that some of it will explode close enough to do fatal damage.



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### The guided missile



Today's anti-aircraft attack method is far more effective. Just *one* heat-seeking ground-to-air missile is released, which homes accurately in on its target.

That's what targeted marketing is all about. Recruitment agencies say that the ideal job advert will attract just one applicant, and that will be the perfect candidate for the job. Ideally, that is what all advertising should aim for. That's clearly impractical, but your advertising and promotion should be moving in that direction.

Unless you are targeting just one specific prospect (and there are occasions when you could be doing just that), practical targeted marketing could, perhaps be more accurately described as...

### ...Batch targeting

This is where you break your overall target market down into manageable segments - such as one specific industry, or a geographical area, or a demographic profile. The segments should not just be ones which are convenient to you, but ones which allow you to direct, to one specific target market, promotional messages which:

- Are highly relevant to the prospects in that sector
- Convince them that you are a specialist in *their* own activity / interest area
- Show them that you can meet their own *specific* needs.

If, for example, you sell office equipment or consumables, you obviously have a vast market - almost every type of business. But, instead of sending out thousands of mailings to every type of business, pick out, say, stone quarries (to pick an unusual example!) You could focus on dust covers for equipment and the more rugged end of office equipment ranges. You can demonstrate that you understand the needs of the quarrying industry. If you've got a few customers in

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that type of industry, you will already understand their requirements. If not, pick up the phone and *without trying to sell*, do a little market research amongst two or three prospects in that sector.

### **When can this targeted marketing approach be used?**

This particular approach works when:

- You are selling into one market sector or into a wide number of sectors (a 'market sector' is best defined here as a particular industry or type of business).
- You are selling to businesses rather than to retail consumers.
- You are prepared to experiment a little, trying different approaches.
- Your expected average order size is at least GBP 200 (USD 300)
- You don't mind using the telephone (or have got a volunteer to phone for you!) *and* you have got some way of sending out 20 - 50 letters per week (say, a simple mailmerge program on a word processor).
- You need new customers!

If all of these apply to you, then read on...

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## The seven stages of targeted marketing

The 7 stages, involving a mixture of tele-research, direct mail and telesales, are listed below. Each stage will be described in more detail later in this article:

1. **Selection of key target market sectors:** identifying what *types* of customers you want to do business with.
2. **List research:** compiling lists of potential customers.
3. **Telephone research:** to ensure that the information gained from the lists is accurate, and to get any supplementary information not included in the mailing lists.
4. **Prospect selection:** based on the lists and telephone research, to eliminate any inappropriate prospects and / or to produce a smaller, manageable sub-list for this particular mailing.
5. **Mailshot:** sending out a letter and appropriate sales literature to the selected prospects.
6. **Telephone follow-up:** this is where you really *go* for whatever it is you are wanting - a sales meeting, a trial order, the opportunity to quote... whatever is your objective.
7. **Recording, measuring, monitoring:** so that you know what has worked, what has not, what actions you need to take next.

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### Stage 1: Selection of target market sectors

The chances are that your product or service can be sold into a wide variety of businesses - or it may be that geographical areas are a more important way of defining your markets.

So, sit down and think of, say, 6 market sectors - types of organisations - which could contain good potential customers. And *don't* say "we can sell to anyone". This is *targeted* marketing, remember. Some of the criteria you could use to select the key targets might be:

- Sectors into which you have sold in the past, or where you have current customers - so you can demonstrate some credibility in understanding their specific needs.
- Sectors where your product might have an edge over your competitors (your cleaning cloths, say, are better at dealing with engineering swarf than other peoples')
- Sectors which are increasingly developing a need for your services (like lawyers are getting more interested in marketing!)
- Geographical sectors where you have a distance advantage over your competitors.

Come on... do a bit of creative thinking NOW. Remember - SIX different market (or geographical) sectors to start with.

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### Stage 2: List research

What you need now are lists of prospective customers in your chosen market sectors. There are many sources of lists, some being better than others. If you are reasonably computerised in your operations (e.g. you can use databases or contact tracking software with mailmerge facilities) try to get lists which are available on disk (or, increasingly, on CD-ROM).

Here are a few sources to try

**Yellow Pages:** Good because they are in industry categories, but weak because they are often at least a year out of date, there are no named contacts and (in the UK, at least), postal codes are missing.

**Business directories:** .. such as Kompass and Dun & Bradstreet. Chambers of Commerce and town authorities also sometimes make available lists of local companies, categorised by industry. Business directories sometimes have named contacts listed for each company.

**Trade directories:** There are literally thousands of trade directories, most of them highly industry specific. In the UK, check out the *Directory of Directories* in your local reference library.

**Mailing list brokers:** These are our favourites for three reasons:

1. They are often reasonably up to date - if you deal with a reputable mailing list broker.
2. They often contain supplementary information on contacts, number of employees, turnover - which helps you to assess the size of the prospect.
3. Increasingly, lists are available on computer disk format (specify comma-delimited format when ordering - that's often the easiest to handle on databases).

**Trade show and exhibition catalogues:** specific trade shows often have good catalogues of exhibitors, who may be relevant to your market sector. You can sometimes get back numbers of catalogues from the exhibition organisers

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### Stage 3: Telephone research

Don't believe that the lists you have compiled are accurate! The chances are that they will not be up to date. In particular, people will have changed and, since you will be writing to them *personally* it is vital that you get the right name.

So the purpose of this stage is to check the name and position of the decision maker - or decision influencer - who is most likely to be in a position to buy, or authorise the buying of your product or service.

At the same time, you can check that the company hasn't moved (they do, you know!) and perhaps get other useful information to let you know if they are a real prospect.

At this point, let me say that you will *not* be mailing out thousands, or even hundreds of letters a week. Only enough that you can comfortably follow up by telephone within a week or so of sending out the mailshot (the next stage). So, having selected which your first target market sector is going to be, research 50 - 60 at the most to check that your information is correct. Remember, what you are aiming to do **each** week is to:

- Research some names on the lists.
- Select some names for mailshots.
- Send out some mailshots.
- Follow up some mailshots.

In this way, a continuous *process* will be created and the marketing impetus will be maintained. So bear this weekly list of tasks in mind when deciding how many names to research in one batch.

So.. you get through to the switchboard of one of your target companies. What's the first question you ask? "*I **need** to write to your company. Can you tell me your post code please?*" Note the word "need" - it puts the switchboard operator in the position of **having** to tell you! And it's an innocuous question - s/he doesn't feel threatened. Also, it enables you to check that the address is right (assuming you have the post code anyway - remember, companies can still move, but retain the same phone number).

Next, get the name of the decision maker / decision influencer that you want to contact. Say "*And can you tell me the name of your Managing Director, please? .. or whatever is the appropriate title of the guy.* Check very carefully the initials and the spelling of the surname - and, if there's any doubt, whether it's a Mr or a Ms. Remember, a person's name, to them, is the sweetest sound in the world!

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After that, you could gently probe for any other info that might help you to qualify the prospect as a real potential customer. Eg. "Do you know if your company actually uses 'xyz'? Chances are that s/he doesn't, but it's surprising what you can learn from a switchboard operator! I know; I've done it

That's Stage 3. The next one is shorter...

### Stage 4: Prospect selection

This one is relatively easy. Based on what you have learnt from your telephone research, you can now start to refine the list that you are going to mail out to in a few days time. And because of your careful research, you're going to hit some highly qualified prospects.

Two key points:

1. If in doubt, leave the prospect *in*.
2. If you've kicked out too many names at this stage, go back to Stage 3 and add a few more names to research. After a while, you'll get a feel for the 'redundancy' element of each list. It might be 10 per cent, it might be 25 per cent. But you are learning all the time!

### Stage 5: Sending out the mailshot

If you've got doubts about direct mail (i.e. you think of it as 'junk' mail), don't take our word for it. Look at who's using it. In the UK, over £1,000 million every year is spent on this medium, most of it by large corporations. They wouldn't keep spending this sort of money if it were wasted. Maybe your view is coloured by the fact that *you* throw most of your 'junk' mail away. Quite right.. because most of it is not targeted; you are not interested in it. But *you* are doing better. Because you have taken the trouble to research and qualify prospects, **your** direct mail will be more effective!

**The sales letter:** National and international research has shown that if you can afford to send out *either* a sales letter *or* sales literature (but not both), then send out the letter. People like reading letters!

The purpose of the letter is two-fold:

1. To get the recipient to read the sales literature (if enclosed)
2. To get the recipient to act in the way that we want them to act

So, given that the sales letter is the most important part of the mailshot, how can you compose the "perfect" sales letter? This is something that we'll be covering on this site very soon.

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But remember, that you have to grab people's attention quickly - and you have to make the letter easy to read. (Sorry, if you were expecting tips on the "perfect" letter here - but I'm running out of space - and your downloading time). You'll have to come back for more.

Just a few quick pointers about the mailout:

**The 'drop' day:** - the day on which your letter arrives. The best day for business mail is Wednesday, second best Tuesday and Thursday, worst days are Monday and Friday. So *always* aim to mail out on a Monday (if your local mail service is good enough!)

**First or second class mail (UK only?):** *Always* use first class. And, if possible, use stamps rather than a franking machine.

**Addressing:** Experiment with handwritten envelopes. Some folks report a much better response rate from these (if the handwriting is legible!)

**Envelope 'stuffing':** Place the material in the envelope so that the letter (with its striking headline!) faces the *back* of the envelope. That way, it's the first thing that the reader sees. If you are folding to a smaller envelope, fold so that the headline again comes out first.

The letter **is** vitally important. Make it:

- Personal - use mailmerge to address each letter *personally* to the recipient (getting the name and initials correct).
- Directed to the appropriate industry / geographical sector - using phraseology that the recipient can relate to - and which will demonstrate your understanding of their own personal needs.

### Stage 6: The telephone follow-up

So... the letter has gone out, with a strong message addressed directly to the right decision maker / influencer, at the right address. Up to this point, you probably feel comfortable. But now comes the crunch.. you are going to have to face REJECTION!

Yes, that's right. When you start to telephone all of these carefully targeted, carefully researched folks who have had *just* the right message aimed at them, a lot of people are going to say (in so many words): "NO, I AM NOT INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU ARE OFFERING." (Sorry to have shouted at you, but sometimes that's what it will feel like). So many sales people are happy about the 'pitch' but when it comes to asking for the order, it's like someone is about to shoot them rather than say 'no'. So a lot of people don't like 'asking for the order'. You've got to get through this psychological barrier or - to put it bluntly - your business is dead! You are playing the

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numbers game here, despite all of your careful researching. But that's why I put a price constraint on the minimum size of order for which this technique will work. If it's too small, this method is not time-effective. But if you can stand a 90 per cent rejection rate, then just focus on the ten per cent of 'yes' responses.

OK, that's the 'psyche-up' message over. Back to the practicalities.

Be *absolutely* clear in your mind what you expect from this telephone call. Do you **want** a sales meeting? An opportunity to quote? A trial order? Or just that the prospect keeps your literature on file (more than this, I hope!). Most people will say "*If I can get face-to-face with the prospects, I can sell to them.*" And this probably applies to you (if not, wait for a future article on how to manage the face-to-face sales meeting). Be CLEAR on what you want from this call. If you're not, then forget it.

### Some practical pointers..

**How long after the mailshot?:** Probably between 3 - 10 days after the mailshot should have been received. Sooner, and the recipient may not have received your mailing, later and they may have forgotten it.

**Day of week/time of day?** There's no ideal time - you will always be an *intrusion*. Some research has suggested that the higher levels of management should not be approached on Monday morning or Friday afternoons, whilst middle management are often more receptive at these times. Check it out for yourself! It may be worth while at first keeping a rough record of times of day / days of week when you make successful and unsuccessful calls, and so build up your own 'ideal' schedule.

In a nutshell, that's a practical way to carry out this type of targeted marketing. It won't necessarily be easy. It can be time consuming. And it does require a disciplined approach to make it work. That's why there's one final stage in the process...

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### Stage 7: Recording, measuring and monitoring

Marketing is *not* a precise science, so the results of any actions cannot be predicted. Targeted marketing will require some experimenting to find just the right approach that works for *your* business. And if you are experimenting, it's important that you keep records of what you do and what the results were. Also, it can help to motivate you (or whoever you have delegated the work to) if you know what sort of success rate to expect. If you hit a 2 per cent conversion rate this week, you might feel disappointed - unless you realise that in the previous two weeks it was only 1 per cent.

If you are using a database or some sort of contact management software, then this recording can be seamlessly integrated into your targeted marketing process. Ideally, you should be recording and retaining the following for each batch of letters you send out:

- The source of the names and addresses
- The date(s) when they were researched
- The actual letter sent
- How many follow-up calls in total you made
- How many of these resulted in a contact with the person you were aiming to reach (a 4:1 calls:contact ratio is not unusual)
- How many of these contacts got the results you wanted (e.g. a sales meeting)
- Subsequently, how many sales (and the value of the sales) resulted from this particular mailshot.

This may sound tedious, but it is essential if you are to change your targeted marketing approach as a result of being more or less successful with a particular:

- Market sector
- Source of mailing names
- Wording of a sales letter

If you only change one variable at a time **and** you record and measure the results, you will have a very powerful marketing weapon at your disposal.

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# 20 Ways To Increase Your Sales

## 2. Increase Your Sales With A Customer Newsletter

By David Kandler

Consider this:

- Newsletters have four times the readership of a traditional ad.
- Readers find newsletters to be more credible and believable than ads. Publishing a professional newsletter helps establish your company as an authority and leader in its field. It also improves name recognition and sets your company apart from the competition in the minds of readers.
- A newsletter allows you to give more in-depth information to readers than an ad. This is especially important when you're trying to educate consumers about complex products or services. Once customers fully understand the many benefits of your products and services, they'll be more likely to buy.
- Newsletters have a longer shelf life than ads and are more likely to be read by multiple people. Chances are you've probably received a newsletter in the mail, read it and passed it on to a co-worker or family member who was interested in the information. Or you may have clipped an interesting newsletter article and posted it on a bulletin board. Ads, on the other hand, are rarely clipped and posted or shared with others.
- Newsletters can be used to attract new customers, increase repeat business from existing clients, enhance your company's reputation as an industry leader and improve customer communications.

However, a customer newsletter will only be effective if it is carefully planned and looks professional. Here are some tips to help make your customer newsletter more effective at generating sales:

### **Carefully choose your articles so each one generates results.**

Don't waste space by printing "fluff" articles that have nothing to do with your company's area of expertise. Also, avoid using generic filler material, such as recipes, famous quotations, etc.

Every article should be used to generate specific results. For example, one article might be used to prompt sales by introducing a new product and its benefits. Another article might profile one of your best customers, showing readers new ways to use your company's products and services. Another story might improve customer trust in your company

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by highlighting the impressive qualifications and accomplishments of key employees. Yet another article might discuss a hot industry trend and would draw in new readers who comprise your target market.

Attract more readers — and more potential customers — by featuring articles that give free, helpful tips related to your company's area of expertise. These should be tips that are useful to readers regardless of if they do business with you. For instance, a home-security company might offer crime-prevention tips in its customer newsletter. A hotel conference centre might offer meeting-planning tips in the newsletter that it sends to corporate clients. A sign company that sends a newsletter to local businesses might list tips on how to choose the right colour combinations for an interior sign.

These "free tips" articles are not only a good way to demonstrate that your company is an industry expert and is concerned with helping out customers. They also draw in a wider range of readers who will likely get hooked on the newsletter and read your other more sales-oriented articles.

### **Generate sales leads by promoting free subscriptions to your newsletter.**

An easy way to generate sales leads is to add a line at the bottom of your company's marketing materials — ads, brochures, catalogues, signs, etc. — that encourages customers to call and get a free subscription to your newsletter. For instance, a home-security company might add a sentence at the bottom of its newspaper ads saying "For valuable tips on crime prevention, call us now and get a free subscription to our *Crime Watch* newsletter."

People who add their names to your mailing list make excellent qualified sales leads. For instance, in the example above the home-security company's sales people would want to follow up with each subscriber because they already know that those who've requested the newsletter are concerned about crime. Thus, those subscribers would be likely candidates for home-security systems.

### **Add customer testimonials to give your newsletter more impact**

Customer testimonials can be extremely persuasive to potential clients. You can use these testimonials in several ways.

The most effective way is to do a feature story on one of your satisfied clients. Interview the customer and quote the person as to how beneficial your products have been to him or her, how helpful your company's employees were, how he or she would recommend your company to others, etc.

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Another way to use customer testimonials is to put a feature in your newsletter called "From the Mailbag," or something similar. Here you can reprint positive, complimentary customer letters that your company has received.

If your company doesn't get many customer letters, one good way to generate customer testimonials is to send out a feedback form to each customer who orders one of your products or services. Ask open-ended questions, like: "How satisfied are you with the product you ordered?" "Please describe the level of customer service you received." "How can we improve the product or service that you received?"

At the bottom of the feedback form, add a sentence that says: "Occasionally, we use customer comments in our promotional materials. Is it OK if we use your comments?" Then have the customer check a "yes" or "no" box.

If the person approves, you can then reprint any appropriate comments in your newsletter's customer testimonial feature.

### Maximize your newsletter's exposure

If your company is going through the time and expense of publishing a newsletter, you'll want to get maximum exposure out of it. Some suggestions:

- Mail your company's newsletter to all former and current customers. Also, send it to potential customers who may have requested information on your products in the past, but never ordered from you.
- Give your salespeople copies of the newsletter to hand out on sales calls. Asking potential customers if they'd like a "free newsletter full of valuable tips," is a great door-opener and conversation starter for salespeople who make cold calls.
- Send the newsletters to all potential clients who may have a strong interest in certain articles. Place a stack of newsletters at your places of business, wherever customers visit. This may include your office lobby, a retail store or showroom.
- Give out your newsletters at your company's trade-show and exhibition booths.
- Put your newsletter and its back issues on your company's Web site. No other medium gives you such widespread access to potential clients throughout the world for such little cost.

David Kandler is President of <a href="http://CompanyNewsletters.com">CompanyNewsletters.com</a> – an Internet firm that produces newsletters for companies.
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## 20 Ways To Increase Your Sales

### 3. Increase Your Sales Through Using Testimonials

By Nick Robinson

Testimonials help us to convince prospective customers that our product is good. It's as simple as that. And it's a powerful marketing technique

"I hear what you say but I'm still not convinced." How often have you faced potential customers whom you know needs your product or service - and have the money to buy it? But you can't get them to go ahead with the order, because they still don't believe they will achieve the results you claim? It's your Number One sales challenge, whether you sell to companies, in people's homes or to customers in a retail store or dealership. And it's especially acute for the small business. After all, if you have only a modest track record, why should they trust you? It's always safer to buy from a big nationally known supplier!

#### What's the solution?

They're either saying "prove to me I can believe you" or their hesitation is covering up another, still unvoiced objection. The strongest way to handle that is to show them a testimonial. It comes from a customer just like them, who once had similar doubts but is now delighted with you. "You're absolutely right to want solid proof we can help you," you say. "You've probably heard of Brown & Co, the local [engineering firm]?"

Whatever the customer responds, continue: "Mr Brown raised a very similar point last year, but luckily went ahead with the order. Here is a letter he's just written to us." You show the customer Mr Brown's letter, on his company letterhead. It warmly recommends your company. You add "I'm sure he wouldn't mind if you contacted him. Would you like to call him now?"

In my own experience of 28 years in marketing, the customer never does place that call! Instead, his bluff being called (if it was a bluff), he'll raise his real objection: "well, I'm really not sure about the payment terms...(etc)". Now you can handle that objection and close the sale. More likely, being reassured by that third-party proof, he'll proceed with the order.

The testimonial close is powerful!

You can adapt it in nearly any situation where the prospect stalls you, even when gaining that vital first appointment. Has the prospect said "we already have a supplier," "we have no budget", "I'm too busy just now"? You reply "Mr Brown of

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Brown & Co had exactly the same reservations... but now he's written us a nice letter.

It confirms he gained [describe the result]. I'll show it to you when we meet. Would Monday at 10.30am or Tuesday at 3pm be better for you? (etc)" Are you a retail operation? And selling high-value products? Then a written testimonial can close the sale across the sales counter, just as effectively as in a client's office. But few retailers do it! (You should.)

Ideally, print up a wealth of such testimonials. You'll then have the right one aptly to hand, whatever the customer's situation. You can also quote snippets from them in your ads, direct mail and brochures, of course - with the customer's written permission.

### **How do you persuade your satisfied customers to give you testimonials?**

Ask them! If you market to companies, tell your client that testimonials are the lifeblood of your business. Add "isn't that true of yours, too?" They'll sagely nod their head. Then say "Would you be happy to give me a testimonial I can use?" It's hard for them to say No, and you urge them to dictate it to their secretary there and then on their letterhead.

Another way is to mail a client satisfaction survey, that asks: "in the last three months, on a scale of ten, how responsive have we been to you? How well have we understood your needs? How satisfied overall are you with us?" Finally, ask "if your experience has been positive, would you care to jot a testimonial here that we can quote in our promotional materials?" Ask them to add their signed permission for you to use it.

Another idea is to **draft your own ideal "testimonial"** which they need only sign, with permission for you to use. Example:

*"I am happy to confirm that by hiring Brown & Co we have achieved a 30% reduction in inventory, and released a welcome amount of working capital which has repaid the company's fees several times. Signed....."*

If they need encouragement, pledge a sum to a local charity for every positive endorsement they sign.

If you sell to businesses, then even tape record your client's testimonial. Ask the client to specify on tape the period you worked, the services you provided, the way you did it and the results achieved, their importance to the client, and the industry background at the time. ("In a year when our industry as a whole was working 20% below capacity, we achieved a record 43% growth in sales. Much of this success was due to the excellent work done by [you].")

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Playing a tape of your client's voice warmly approving you is a far more powerful sales close than even a written testimonial - especially at a group presentation. (If the client is shy about tape recorders, use someone else's voice to dictate their written testimonial.)

### **Selling to consumers from a retail outlet, restaurant or dealership?**

Give your customers a card. Ask them to write on it something nice about your service or products, sign it and tick a box attesting you can use it for publicity. (Thank them with a discount or small gift.) Could you even photograph the customer, smiling happily in your premises? Then display those cards in your window - and change them often! ("What our customers told us this week"). Folk will stop by to see if they know anybody mentioned there.

If they do, offer them a discount too, if they come in. They'll rush to tell the other party you've named about their odd experience - and your visibility and loyalty grow. Even give blank "testimonial" cards to your customers. Ask their friends to come in, bring the card, buy a product and give a signed testimonial. Both then get a gift! (Of course, the first customer must come back to the store to collect it. Which gives you another opportunity to sell them something...)

Could you ask customers about their affiliations with local sports, social or church groups? Then add alongside their displayed testimonial "A special welcome for all other members of Luton Church Choir [or the Luton Unix Users Group, etc]!" When they prove their membership, they can claim a gift or discount. (Reinforce this by sending Invitation cards to the group's secretary, to distribute to members. They can exchange them for a gift when they walk in.)

Testimonials can indeed drive your most powerful sales approaches, used imaginatively. And they cost you little or nothing to acquire!

Nick Robinson is Chairman of [The Marketing Guild Ltd](#), which helps businesses gain more profit from their marketing budgets.

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### 4. Increase Your Sales By Getting Repeat Orders

It is always going to be faster, easier, and cheaper to get your existing customers to buy than to lure in new customers.

Remember, it costs seven times more to gain a new customer than to keep an existing one. Here's a few ways to get repeat orders from your existing customers:

#### **Give your customers a new reason to buy again.**

Offer the service or product they have bought before, but this time with an added incentive. For example, you not only design the web site, but also promote it for the first month.

Big discount stores have discovered the truth in this system. You'll notice they go wide but not very deep. Instead of selling six different styles of can openers, they sell just one or two types of 60 different kitchen utensils.

Use this same principle to maintain your business' niche focus while bringing existing customers more and more related products.

Each time you add a new related product to your line, blast out another email to your customer base announcing your addition .

#### **Give excellent service**

Nothing will get a customer running away from you more than poor service. Even if there is a problem with whatever you have sold them, they will still be likely to come back to you if you resolve the problem quickly and courteously.

#### **Widen your product range**

See the article in this eBook about "Product Development Strategies". If you have a seasonal business, try to find products to sell to your existing customers outside the main season for your principle products.

Try to find some products with "residual sales potential" – things which people need to order on a regular basis.

#### **Cultivate your customers**

I don't mean pester them at every opportunity, but make sure that you follow them up on a regular basis. You may need to examine the types of people on your sales force. It is recognised that there are two types of sales people:

**"Hunters"**: These are people who *really* love cold-calling and getting new customers.

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**“Farmers”**: These are people who *hate* breaking new ground and knocking on doors. But they are very good at maintaining relationships with existing customers.

Make sure that you have some “farmers” in your business. And develop systems that ensure that each customer is re-contacted at regular – and appropriate – intervals. Don’t be too rigid in this; some customers will need to be followed up less frequently than others.

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### 5. Increase Your Sales Through Free Seminars

By Kevin Nunley

When the founders of ehow.com started their advice-giving web site, they never anticipated the hot demand for expert help. Their average visitor comes back several times per week to learn how to do something they are having problems with.

Millions of people crave expert information on every topic you can imagine. Offer free seminars on a topic you know well and provide the help so many people want.

Your seminar can take many forms. Rent or borrow a large convention room and publicize your seminar in ads and with free publicity. Reserve a large table at a favourite restaurant and invite a limited group to lunch and learn. You can even hold your seminar on a telephone conference call (I used to have weekly call that included up to 110 people) or in an Internet chat room.

Keep your seminar commercial free. Provide good information and how-to tips. You can invite attendees to pick up a "green sheet" on the way out. It can include more tips, resources, and your best deals.

Invite attendees to come by your store or office or contact you via email or phone for more personalized help.

[Kevin Nunley](#) provides marketing and copy writing services.

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### **6. Increase Your Sales By Repeat Advertising**

Have you ever run a one time ad and then wondered why you didn't get much response? Advertising and marketing almost always takes repeated use to work properly. Once in a while you will get a product or service that sells with the first ad, but most take time to sink in with customers.

There's an old newspaperman's joke that dates back more than 100 years that illustrates how ads work.

1. The first time a man looks at an ad, he doesn't see it.
2. The second time, he doesn't notice it.
3. The third time, he is conscious of its existence.
4. The fourth time, he faintly remembers having seen it.

The joke continues on until the sixteenth time has him thinking he'll buy some day and the twentieth time he sees the ad he instructs his wife to go out and buy the product.

#### **Little and often**

If you can only afford one big advert or a lot of small ones, then go for "little and often", because of this need for ads to slowly sink in.

"Little and often" can often get you some good discounts if you book a series of ads ahead. A weekly publication, for example, will often give discounts for a block of 4 ads, or 6 ads or 13 ads. Be prepared to haggle!

#### **Watch your competitors**

If you are not sure in which publication to advertise, monitor a few publications over a period of time. If one or more of your competitors are advertising frequently, the chances are that that publication is successful for them; it's a good indicator.

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### 7. Increase Your Sales With Relevant Benefits

By Bryan Eisenberg

Everyone knows benefits sell. And everyone seems to sell benefits. But not all benefits sell. So what's a seller to do?

Uncover the benefits that carry the most relevance with your customers.

When discussing product benefits, most companies ask only one question: What makes this product different and better than similar products?

This question is important. But it focuses on the product, not on the customer. It places undeserved emphasis on the product's uniqueness. That's dicey because different isn't always better, and better products don't always sell that way. Different is just different, and better is relative depending on which persona you sell to.

#### Uncovering Relevant Benefits

Start by considering the product's attributes:

- **Features.** What does the product offer? For example, "This application handles multiple users concurrently."
- **Advantages.** What do the features do? "This application provides essential information in real time."
- **Benefits.** What do the features mean? "This information will allow your managers to keep their fingers on the company's financial pulse at all times."
- **Motives.** What do the features satisfy? "This feature will provide cost-savings, control, and efficiency."

Then follow these steps:

1. List everything the product does. Include standard, technical, supportive, and abstract features.
2. For each feature, list a relative advantage.
3. List each advantage's benefits from the customer perspective.
4. List the motives: the benefits, features, and advantages that satisfy the customer.

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### Case Study: The Beer Machine

We recently went through these steps with a new client, The Beer Machine. (We'll re-launch its Web site with new relevant selling benefits by the fall.)

The Beer Machine unit is a product that's simple and unique by nature. As a result, our feature list was very short. Here's what we arrived at after observing and discussing product attributes:

**Feature:** The unit is a plastic, keg-shaped tube that lets customers brew beer.

**Advantage:** Customers can brew beer inexpensively at home.

**Benefit:** Customers don't have to build a microbrewery to brew their own beer. They save money, compared to buying premium beer.

This is where most would take the above list and try to push this product on unsuspecting customers. Or worse, tout meaningless features and wedge irrelevant benefits into the product offering.

Here's where the fourth, and arguably most important, step comes in.

At first blush, there were no relevant **motives** based on the features and advantages we identified. Saving money just didn't seem a magnetic enough motive to move customers to spend upwards of a hundred bucks on this product.

We needed to discover the benefits that existed outside the product's physical ability and features. To do this, we had to unearth all possible and reasonable answers to the question: What benefits of this product motivate customers to buy it?

You can do this by asking existing customers, at the end of the purchase, a simple, open-ended question like, "Why did you buy today?" It's mission-critical *not* to present customers with multiple-choice answers. You want uninhibited, unprovoked answers that indicate each respondent's specific motivation or reason. Later, these can be sorted and grouped into product attributes and relevant benefits.

Another method is to scour correspondence from satisfied customers. Many offer clues to customer motivations.

With The Beer Machine, we uncovered quite a few benefits, such as the pride of brewing for yourself, taste, bragging rights, entertaining options, and the adventure of creating unique beer recipes. These are only a few of a gaggle of relevant benefits we found during our research. Some things were as suspected; not one customer mentioned saving money on beer as a motivation for the purchase.

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Do you know all the relevant benefits of your product or service? Find out. You may just unearth a whole new way to increase sales.

Bryan Eisenberg is co-founder and chief persuasion officer of Future Now. Since 1998, [Future Now](#), specialises in training and consulting on how to increase the conversion rates of Web sites, landing pages, e-mail, and marketing campaigns.

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### 8. Increase Your Sales With Up-Selling

**Offer your existing customer base something extra...and watch your business grow.**

By David Meier

Most businesses have the potential to increase sales simply by selling *more* to their existing customers. When you attempt to sell additional products and services to members of your business's current customer base, you are applying a growth technique known as the up-sell.

The rationale behind implementing the up-sell is based on both cost savings and marketing efficiency factors. It is absolutely essential that your business develop appropriate backend up-sell products and services. Without these, your business' sales dollars will have to come from marketing strategies designed to generate "initial sales," which tend to be the most costly and time-consuming to implement. Not only is up-sell marketing less costly, but each dollar spent to remarket to existing customers tends to generate far more additional sales dollars from this up-sell marketing than corresponding marketing dollars spent in the initial sales and marketing efforts.

If your business can effectively reach its existing customer base, it will have the advantage of marketing to those who already know and like your business and its products and services. Your business's existing customers are aware that your business can meet their needs and wants, and within a cost structure they accept.

The following are four major ways to up-sell your existing customers. Note: In our example, let's assume you are in the media business.

**Sell more of what your customers are already buying.**

Each of your existing customers have certain buying habits. Ideally you will have accumulated data that allows you to reference both the specific items they purchase as well as their frequency. With this information, you can offer additional products and services in which the customer has already proved to have an interest. For example, sell other music CDs featuring your customers' favourite recording artists, or send your customers a newsletter announcing new releases.

**Sell complementary products and services.** Your business may have products and services that can be sold in conjunction with other products and services. These items are often an easy up-sell that can be made at the point of purchase. For example, when a customer buys a music CD, you could offer them a CD carrying case or a storage tower.

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### **Introduce non-complementary products and services.**

Your current customers possess a degree of trust in your business, and this can be converted into sales of products and services that are not directly related to the customers' existing purchases. For example, a customer who typically buys music CDs can be introduced to videotapes and DVDs that provide access to the latest in recorded movies.

### **Offer new products and services that your business has added.**

As your business adds new products and services, these can be offered to your existing customers. This can be done without your having to convert these customers to your business, as they already like your business and how it operates. For example, if your media business adds media equipment, such as CD, video and/or DVD players, these can also be offered to existing customers.

Whatever your approach to generating additional sales, remember that the key to any up-sell effort is your ability to have collected and properly maintained an active database of your existing customers. This database should include a record of their current buying tendencies as well as an efficient way to access, interpret and use the database's information in developing your business' up-sell marketing strategies.

David Meier is the founder and COO of [Small Business 411](#), which provides small-business owners with ongoing business coaching and the knowledge and support required to enable them to become truly successful entrepreneurs

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### 9. Increase Your Sales By Listening More than Talking

We need to practice our listening skills, for only then will we learn what our audience wants. All of us (well, most of us!) have two ears and one mouth. But do we use them in that proportion? Very seldom.

Often, when we are eager to put ourselves, our company or our products over in a good light, we tend to let our mouth do most of the work. It seems the 'easy' thing to do. And, like many 'easy' solutions, it's not the best one. So try all of the following the next time that you want to impress someone:

**Ask questions** - especially about the other person and his/her business. And listen a lot to what they have to say.

**Ask simple questions.** Let the other person have time to concentrate on their answer, instead of trying to work out what your question is.

**Ask only one question at a time.** If you ask a string of questions, the chances are that the other person will only answer either the easiest question, or the last question.

**Concentrate on their reply.** It's so easy to start thinking of the next question you are going to ask. And when we do this, we fail to remember (or sometimes even hear) the answer. If you don't concentrate, it will show. The other person will quickly realise that you are not really interested in their answer.

**Ask again.** If you don't understand all or some of the answer, don't be afraid to ask for more explanation. It won't show that you are a dummy. It will show that (a) you have been listening and (b) that you are really interested in their answer.

So remember, when talking with someone, listen carefully, listen actively - and cut down the amount of talking that you do. You will be amazed at the results!

#### **Show that you are listening**

Eye contact is one of the most important parts of any conversation. There is nothing worse than trying to talk to someone who is not looking at you - it says that you are not interested in anything that they are saying. Killer eye contact shows that they are important and what they are saying is interesting. People are much more likely to elaborate, and give more information if you make good eye contact.

If you are taking notes, make a point of looking up every few seconds, to let them know you are still with them.

If you are asking a question, make sure you are looking at them as you speak.

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Make a point of looking at the person frequently. If you are showing them a graph or figure, at least once for every point you are making.

Eye contact also gives you the opportunity to "read" the other person. If they start to look away from you, its time to move on to another subject, or wrap up the conversation entirely. If they look puzzled, you can stop and explain yourself more clearly

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## 20 Ways To Increase Your Sales

### 10. Increase Your Sales By Overcoming the Price Objection

No matter how we try to play down 'price' when we are selling, it's often the factor that is uppermost in your prospect's mind. How do you overcome the price objection? Because, when we come to ask for the order, we frequently get the objection: **"Your price is too high"**. Before this stage is reached, we can often try to reduce the emphasis on 'price' in the buyer's mind. Here are three ways to do this:

**"It only costs..."** - using the word 'only' suggests that the price of what you are selling is low compared with your competitors, or all the benefits that you are offering.

**Focus on price differences** rather than the actual price. Often the apparent price differences between what you are selling and what your competitors are charging are, in the buyer's mind, not all that great. This is particularly true if you are selling a service. So keep stressing the difference in price and all the benefits that the buyer will get: "Yes, it's true that you will be paying 1,500 for my service, and you've been offered nearly the same for 1,300. But let's think for a moment what you will get for that extra 200.. "

**Talk smaller figures.** If, for example, you are offering a training course for five people for which you are quoting 2,000, it would be equally true to present it in terms of "400 per person", which sounds a lot more reasonable. Don't however, go to ridiculous extremes by breaking it down into too many units (such as "that's 200 in the morning and 200 in the afternoon")!

OK, so you've done that - but you still get the objection "Your price is too high". Before you can answer that, you must ask more questions to find out exactly what the prospect means. It could be one or more of the following:

- Outside my budget
- More expensive than I thought
- I'm not convinced of the value
- I haven't got any money
- It's more than I can authorise
- My job is to beat salesmen down on price
- I really don't want it

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- I want a discount!
- It's outside our budget
- I'm not the person who decides

Until you know what lies behind the statement "Your price is too high", you can't start to overcome this objection. Once you know the real reason, you'll either find that making the sale (to this particular person) is impossible - or, you'll be able to come up with winning answers.

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## 20 Ways To Increase Your Sales

### 11. Increase Your Sales Through Offering Guarantees

by Michael Fortin

While the greater portion of my career has been in business development consulting and speaking, I have spent many years in direct marketing and three years on the Web. My favourite marketing "guru" is [Dan Kennedy](#), often dubbed "The Millionaire Maker. And if there is one lesson that he teaches from which I derive the most profitable results in my direct marketing efforts, one of many from a system he calls "Magnetic Marketing," is the awesome power behind the use of guarantees.

If you offer a product or service without a guarantee, you're losing a great percentage of potential sales. Obviously, the Internet has opened many doors, including those to many unscrupulous entrepreneurs. Scams and snake oils are rampant. Since there is no official police or watchdog on the Internet, such scams are probably even greater as a result. I would even venture as to say that millions of dollars are lost to these scamsters each month.

#### Guarantees Increase Sales

While there are many regionally accredited entities and watchdogs, it doesn't stop many a crafty entrepreneur to bypass the systems to sell their wares. CBC Radio International news recently reported a scheme in which a weight-loss drug not yet approved in Canada is being sold by a Canadian entrepreneur on the 'Net. The matter is currently under investigation by the pharmaceutical manufacturer and Canadian health officials.

Nevertheless, because of these tricksters and the multitude of challenges presented on the Web, people are leery and will increasingly seek out more secure means to benefit from offers. Guarantees are therefore powerful tools for the prosperity-seeking marketer and can do two very important things that will help grow one's profits: Increase sales and reduce returns.

When you offer a guarantee, you reduce the scepticism around the purchase of your product or service. Consumers are understandably cautious and more so when making purchases via the web. And guarantees give you an almost instant credibility with potential customers. For example, if you have a professionally-looking Web site, an ethical sales approach, and even a proven product or service, the lack of a guarantee will still, particularly on the Internet, cause most prospects to perceive your offer as questionable in the very least.

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### Guarantees Increase Perceived Value

Chris Ayers, publisher of "[Unlimited Traffic!](#)", gives an astonishing real-life example. Writes Ayers, "One of my first direct mail products years ago was a self-study program. When I first offered the program in a magazine, my sales weren't even enough to cover the cost of the ad. I changed my ad and sales letter to include a guarantee. The number of responses to the same ad increased by a factor of 20 and my conversion rate from my sales letter rose from 10% to almost 40%."

Take for instance the story of the Monaghan brothers. The two ran a small business in order to pay their way through college. While one worked the day shift in order to attend school at night, the other did the converse. After about a year in the money-losing venture, one of the brothers sold his share of the business for a beat-up old car. The other, however, with a good dose of stick-to-it-iveness, decided to make something of his fledgling pizzeria.

According to some interviews he recently gave, Tom Monaghan said that, at the time, he wasn't quite sure that his decision to put a guarantee on his pizza delivery would change much. But obviously, history tells us that his decision was the greatest one he ever made. By simply marketing the strength of a guarantee, i.e., "Pizza delivered fresh in 30 minutes or it's free," Domino's Pizza became the multimillion dollar franchise operation we know today.

### Guarantees Reduce Returns

Guarantees will increase sales. And the stronger the guarantee, the larger the increase. But unbeknownst to many marketers, one of the most important benefits of using a guarantee is the fact that it can actually reduce returns. According to certain successful marketers such as Ayers, a strong guarantee results in fewer returns. For instance, Ayers got fewer returns with a 90 day guarantee than he did with a 30 day guarantee. Others got fewer returns when they offered to let clients keep some bonus items if the product was returned.

The parallel obviously dictates. While people order, especially from the Web because of the convenience it offers, an offer that provides a no-hassle return policy (or risk-free promise) adds to the convenience factor and instills a greater confidence in the buyer's psyche. If you offer a product or service, find ways to offer a guarantee along with it. Rather than taking a risk by removing it from your potential clients' decisions, you will likely be decreasing it.

In other words, use guarantees to guarantee your success.

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### **Increase your guarantees**

If you are already offering, say, a six-month guarantee, why not increase it to 12 months, or even 24 months – anything as long as it is better than your competitors. It may cost you a little more in returned products, but this will usually be outweighed by increased sales.

[Michel Fortin](#) is a direct response copywriter and consultant dedicated to turning sales messages into powerful magnets.

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### 12. Increase Your Sales Through Competitive Advantage

by Dr. Tony Alessandra

How many times have you been in a selling situation where the customer's sole focus was on price?

Anytime your customers can't tell the difference between your product or service and your competitor's product or service, the customer will buy based on price. You must be able to differentiate your company, your product, your quality, your service, and yourself if you want the customer to stop focusing on price and start seeing you as a partner, and not just as a supplier. You've got to show him how you are different.

It is amazing how many salespeople do not know and cannot articulate their competitive advantage to their prospects and customers!

How can they expect their prospects and customers to give them their time and attention when they cannot tell them in a concise way what they can do for them that no one else can do?

Companies or sales reps who don't understand their competitive advantage say things like, "Our product is better quality" or "Our service is better."

Even if a company is has better quality or better service, it won't convince its customers just by saying so because many of it's competitors will be saying the exact same thing! You have to define quality. You have to show what outstanding service looks like and how your service differs from the competition.

#### **How can you demonstrate your competitive advantage?**

Suppose someone walks up to you at a business conference or social gathering, introduces herself, and asks you what you do for a living.. **What would you say?**

Did you have any trouble? Did you stumble? Do you know what sets you apart from your competitors? If this was hard for you, you're not alone. If you were to ask the average car dealer, computer store or furniture manufacturer what they do for a living they'll probably say, "I sell cars, computers or furniture." But what does every other car, computer or furniture company say? Exactly the same thing!

#### **So what should the businessperson who understands his competitive advantage say?**

How about this for the car dealer.

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*"My name is Mike from Competitive Motors. We've found that there is a lot of confusion in the automotive market today because there have been over 150 new models introduced in just the past three years. We've developed a computer book that profiles everything the buyer wants in a car and in less than five minutes, identifies the models most likely to fit their needs."*

### **Your Statement of Competitive Advantage has four components:**

1. Your name
2. Your company
3. A statement about a typical problem experienced in your target market
4. An intriguing statement about how you can help solve that problem

The statement of competitive advantage is a 30-second statement of what differentiates your company in the marketplace.

### **Here's another example:**

*"My name is Marlene, and I'm owner of the company 'The Prescription for Doctors.' Physicians today are being pressured by insurers, employers, and patients to cut health care costs. Yet overhead costs for physicians are constantly rising. We provide a service that allows the physician to spend more time with patients and cut overhead costs at the same time resulting in better quality care at a lower cost. It's just what the doctor ordered!"*

### **Here's one last example:**

*"My name is Beth. It's nice to meet you. I'm with a company called 'The Greatest Advertising Agency in the World.' We've discovered that almost every successful product has either been the first entry in it's category or it has been able to create a new category in the mind of it's customers. What we do is help companies who are launching new products or having trouble with old ones ensure that their product is positioned to win!"*

That really does set you apart from the competition and it makes you sound like a polished expert right from the start. But how do you determine exactly what your competitive advantage is?

The best way to determine your competitive advantage is to first break down the components of your product or service into four distinct categories, Competitive uniqueness,

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competitive advantages, competitive parities, and competitive disadvantages. Let's look at each one individually.

### **Competitive Uniqueness:**

What can I do for my customers that no one else can do?  
What can I offer that no one else can offer?

**Competitive advantage:** What can I do for my customer that my competitor can also do, but I can do it better and I can prove it?

**Competitive parity:** My competitors and I are the same here -- no real differentiation.

**Competitive disadvantage:** Where does the competition have an advantage over me?

You may want to do your analysis by market segment, by competitor, by product, or all of them. But knowing your competitive position will quickly get you on your customers wavelength.

Let's say a pharmaceutical company just got FDA approval to sell a new drug. This company now has a competitive uniqueness with this drug, no one else has it.

An example of a competitive advantage might be where two companies market the same drug, but one is a large well-known company and the other is a small relatively unknown company.

Even though both are selling essentially the same product the larger company has an advantage because it's well-known and people ask for the drug by its company name because of its wide name recognition. If no real competitive advantage exists in your product, try to focus on your company reputation, your excellent service, your responsiveness and reliability or any other factors than can positively differentiate you from your competition.

### **Next, let's look at what things are the same between the competition and you?**

What do you have that is exactly like the competition but is still important to the customer? Birth control pills are a good example. Several ethical drug companies make different formulations, but all with similar records for preventing pregnancy. This is competitive parity.

### **And finally, what specific disadvantages does your product possess?**

What does the competition do better than you do? Your drug may have more side effects than the competitor's. That's a competitive disadvantage.

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In the examples I've just given, we were talking about the whole product as being unique or the same. But what do you do if you have a product where some features may be unique, some may be advantages, some may be the same and some may be disadvantages.

Say for example, that you are selling a fax machine that is plain paper, that's (parity), because others do too. But yours will interface with your phone, computer or car telephone, that's (uniqueness). Yours also has the highest resolution available, that's an (advantage), 300 number memory, another (advantage), but it will not do broadcasting and polling, that's a (disadvantage).

### **Here's an example in a service business.**

Federal Express will get it there over night, but so will other companies, so that's (parity), by ten-thirty (used to be an advantage but now that's also parity). But FedEx has a provable better track record, an (advantage), and they can tell you in real time, exactly where your package is, that's a (uniqueness).

I can't stress enough the importance of doing this analysis and knowing your competitive advantage. By doing this analysis you'll be in a position to help your customers distinguish between you and your competition. Once they see your uniqueness and advantages, it will be easier for them to make a decision in your favour.

I'm sure you can see now why it's so important to know what you have to offer that's unique. But you may be wondering, what you'll do with that information once you have it? How will you get it across to the client?

You're going to use this information in every step of the sale. Your entire selling effort will be built around your competitive strengths.

When you are targeting your market, you'll be looking for those clients whose needs are most likely to match your uniqueness and advantages.

When you contact clients you'll open the conversation by letting your clients know what you can do for them that no one else can do.

During the exploring phase, you'll be asking questions that will uncover client needs in the areas where you have uniqueness & advantages.

When you are collaborating with the client, you'll keep the clients focused on your uniqueness and advantages and show him how they match his needs.

During the commitment phase, you'll be summarising all of the competitive advantages that your product has to offer and

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during the assuring phase, you'll be measuring how well your uniqueness and advantages are serving your customer.

If you clearly know your competitive advantages and uniqueness and are able to articulate them clearly to prospective customers, you will rise above your competition to make more sales, more profits and more long-term satisfied customers.

[Dr. Tony Alessandra](#) helps companies build customers, relationships, and the bottom-line. Companies learn how to achieve market dominance through specific strategies designed to outmarket, outsell, and outservice the competition.

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### 13. Increase Your Sales By Finding New Niches

Gap analysis is a way of finding niche markets which can give you a competitive edge. Find out how to do it here..

To solve a company's problems, or to fulfil its managers growth ambitions, moving into new product and market areas ("*diversification*") is often the recommended prescription. But diversification has a poor record of success.

Diversification is most successful when new products are within existing areas of companies' competence.

A ten-year analysis of hundreds of new products showed that successful companies:

Leaned most heavily on previous experience and equipment

Exploited what they could do uniquely well

Discovered and exploited market areas which they could dominate.

Most companies (and people) think that they know their own strengths. They do, to a limited extent. But an outsider looking in can often find hidden strengths (and weaknesses).

Formal **Gap Analysis** has its use, but intuitive leaps are also needed. Had Gap Analysis been applied to transport in 1850, it might have revealed:

- A fast, public system (the train)
- A slow, public system (the stage coach)
- A slow, private system (the horse).
- ... and a gap for a **fast, private** system.

Probable conclusion: ***breed a faster horse!*** The creative leap needed to invent the motor car would not have come from Gap Analysis.

An example of successful Gap Analysis is villa holidays. In the 1970s, package tour companies found a segment of the public who didn't want to organise all of their holidays, but who disliked the regimentation of package tours.

Since then, the exploitation of this market gap has revealed other niches, which has resulted in Fly 'n Drive holidays and Fly 'n Camp holidays (with tents provided at the destination).

The **Ansoff Product-Market Grid** shown below may help you to clarify your thoughts about the direction that diversification could take you.

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Ansoff's Product-Market Grid		MARKETS	
		<i>existing</i>	<i>new</i>
PRODUCTS	<i>existing</i>	A. Operating plans	B. Market development
	<i>new</i>	C. Product development	D. Total diversification

Sales targeting can help to spot market gaps. By focusing on specific market sectors and sub-sectors, new markets may be found for existing products. The research needed for targeting (see the articles on Targeted Marketing in this eBook) can uncover demand for new or changed products within existing markets. Customer surveys can also point to changing demand for new products.

One final point. The grass on the other side of the fence often *does* look greener! But that may be because it has taken skills and resources to get it looking that way. Be certain that you either have these, or can acquire them, before leaping over the fence!

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### 14. Increase Your Sales By Selling At Higher Prices

By Harmony Major

Here's how you can stop selling your products at low prices and learn to raise the price of your products inconspicuously, (or price a new product higher initially), to actually increase your income.

Are you one of thousands of struggling entrepreneurs scared to overprice your products? The following 7 tips will help get you on your way:

#### **1. Realize that there ARE going to be several people that will reject your high(er) prices.**

Work to convince these prospects that your products ARE reasonably priced by getting them to look at the cost in terms of long-term investment -- not initial out of pocket cost.

For instance, if you charge £75 for an business start-up guide that (thoroughly) covers such things as taxes and accounting, website design, employment, and product creation, stress the value of that all-inclusive package. Remind them that if they had to get all of the information in your book from several sources, (i.e. a book on employment, a book on taxes, etc.), they'd possibly be spending several hundred dollars -- instead of a measly £75.

Or, remind them that if they had to take the time to figure out all of the info in your book on their own, it could take weeks. Or months. If they put a high value on their time (and I think your ideal customers should), they should then have no problem spending such a small sum on such a sound investment. After all, what's £75 worth, in exchange for several **months** of their time?

#### **2. Know when to call it quits.**

Work to convince those "hard sell" customers that your product is definitely worth its price, but don't work TOO hard on them. Remember, there are several ideal prospects in your new niche that won't think twice about spending what they'll feel is "chump change" for a quality product. You can't please everyone all of the time, and those penny-pinchers are NOT your ideal prospects. They're the ones that take months to make a decision, then still end up leaving you out in the cold.

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### 3. Don't get stuck in the middle.

Either your prices are "inexpensive" -- or they aren't. Don't get caught in between. If you're going to go high, do it boldly and with confidence, or you'll risk the "in my opinion, your products are a little pricey" syndrome. You want to avoid creating that kind of indecision in your customers. Let them see immediately that your products require a high initial investment, if that's your goal.

### 4. Be sure that you're able to back up the high price of your products with quality.

There's a pretty good "duh" factor with this one. If your product is only worth £50, don't try charging £200 for it -- at least not until you find a way to add on to the product, to increase its value, to match (or ideally exceed) its price.

### 5. Re-evaluate your marketing strategies to attract the right kinds of customers.

What kinds of customers have you been attracting? Before you get in a huff asking me how you're supposed to know THAT ... think about it. It's easy enough. First of all, what kinds of questions are you normally asked by potential customers?

"How come your price is so high?" "What makes what you offer so superior to XYZ product that you can charge so much more for yours?" "Can you cut me a deal so I can just give you half of the cost of your product? I just can't afford it."

Obviously, you're going to want to re-evaluate your marketing methods and sources to weed out these kinds of "cheapskates." (NOTE: If you're being asked those kinds of questions a lot, you may also want to re-evaluate your sales copy. It may not be conveying the true value of your product, if indeed it IS unique, and is worth the price you're asking for it.)

Second of all, what's your hits to sales ratio? Although a lot of factors can influence that ratio, it can definitely help you find out if you've been attracting the right kinds of customers so far. A higher ratio could mean that your marketing efforts are right on target, and fit your ideal customer profile. A lower ratio could mean that you need to re-assess your marketing strategies to refine your focus.

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### 6. Know the difference between "high priced" products ... and "ridiculously priced" products.

To gauge this, you can look at your competition, evaluating both their product and the price they're charging for it. Obviously, if you're offering a home business start-up guide for £30 with no real perks, and are thinking of raising your price to exceed ABC company's £99 guide which includes several perks, it would be a bit foolish to raise your price until you've added to your offer.

On the other hand, "ridiculously priced" products can still work for you if you know how to swing it. It's all about increasing the value of those products. It may be easier when you're first starting out with drastically high prices to work your way up to them, raising the price every time you add value.

You can also ask someone (getting steady sales) who's currently offering products for similar amounts what their trade secrets are for pushing their own outrageously priced wares.

### 7. Just do it.

No, I don't work for Nike. I'm just a strong advocate of ACTION. If you have the attitude that your products are priced too high, and are worrying that your customers feel the same way - they probably are. Why? Because you've subconsciously given them that impression through your sales copy (if you wrote it), and your intimate communications with them. Don't taint your mind (and actions) with the deadly stench of insecurity; your sales will surely suffer for it.

**TIP:** Before I end this, I'd like to advise you to NEVER succumb to the lures of people asking to get your products at a discount, unless they have something concrete and immediate to offer you (as in a true barter). Giving your product away for free or at a reduced price almost NEVER pays off, and can cause you much more trouble than it's worth.

Remember, whatever **you** think can work **can work**. It's just a matter of getting up and figuring out a way to pull it off. And honestly ... is that REALLY so hard?

[Harmony Major](#) helps micro-business site owners and affiliates increase their productivity and promote their websites a lot faster, with the use of aggressive, tightly-focused, power-marketing strategies to quickly **and steadily** increase their profit.

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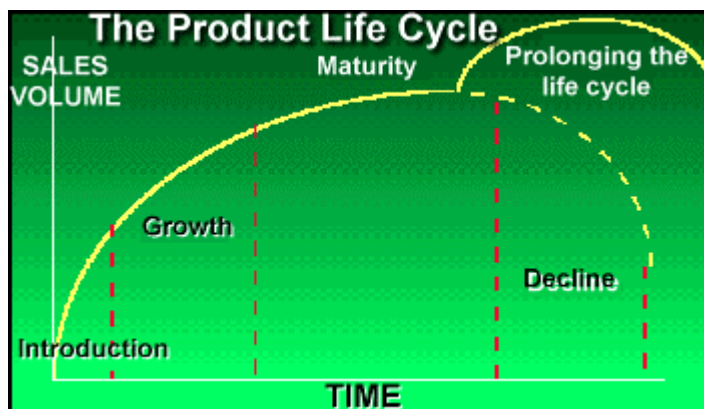
### 15. Increase Your Sales By Developing A Product Strategy

Understanding how markets change, and how they react to your own products and services is a vital part of management and marketing strategy. If you understand the Product Life Cycle, you will be ahead of many of your competitors!

If there is one thing that is certain in this life, that is 'Change'. Wherever we look, we see aspects of our life changing. This is clearly seen on the Internet. We see design, technologies, markets - and web sites - evolve, become the current fashion and then fade away.

This is a very general concept that applies to all products and services. The 'Product Life Cycle' is a description of what happens to anything that we produce and sell. It applies to all businesses, large and small. Understanding it and taking appropriate action is essential if you are to maximise the sales and profits of your business.

As the chart below shows, products (and by this word, we also mean 'services') go through a cycle which can be described in 4 stages:



**Introduction:** Characterised by a low level of sales and losses, as development costs build up. Sales are generally made to 'early adopters' in the market place.

**Growth:** The product gets known more widely. There are few competitors, and profit margins tend to be good.

**Maturity:** Here, sales are maximised. If the product has mass market appeal, this is when the bulk of potential customers will buy. Competition increases, and profit margins tend to fall.

**Decline:** Shown by the dotted line on the chart. The product starts to 'show its age'. New and better competitive products emerge in the market. Sales fall and profits dip sharply.

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### Arresting the decline

It is possible to defer the decline of a product by a number of strategies:

**Increased promotion** - to mop up any laggard potential buyers

**Enhancing the product** - adding new features and benefits, which make it appear to be different from the 'old' product.

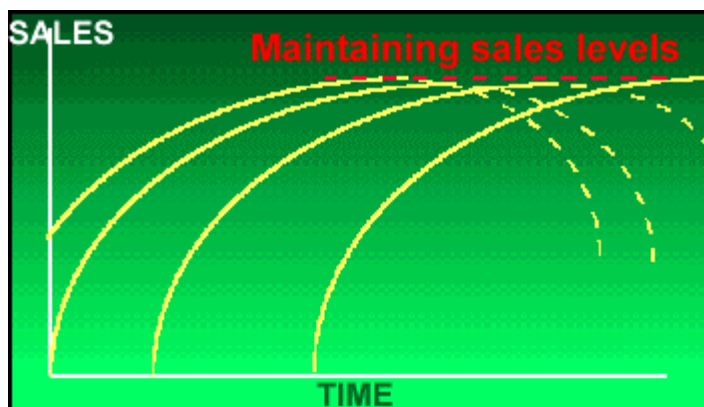
**Introducing add-ons and variations** - giving a wider choice of buying options

**Finding new markets** - in effect, broadening the market place.

Inevitably, however, the life of the product is at an end. And unless new products are introduced by a business, the life of the business is also at an end.

### Introducing new products

If your business has a number of products, it is likely that they will each be at different stages of the product life cycle. If you are to avoid a decline in overall sales and profits, the timing of introduction of new products is crucial. If you are simply to maintain a plateau in sales, the pattern of new product introduction will look something like the chart below.



OK, so this looks fine in theory, but what about the practical implications? First, never expect everything to work out as smoothly as in the text books. But don't reject the theories because of this. Understanding the theories will help you to develop your business more effectively - and you can look around at examples in the wider world to see how these theories have been put into practice.

Take the auto industry, for example. Existing models frequently have their life extended by some subtle reshaping of their body work. Some models which were around for a long time, such as the Ford Escort, ended their life looking nothing like the model when it was first introduced. Manufacturers add

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all sorts of enhancements during the life of a model, to give wider choice, and sometimes, the appearance of the introduction of a new model. 'Special Edition' models can appeal to new, sometimes niche markets. But auto manufacturers also plan well into the future so that they can introduce new models to take over as the older models start to mature and go into decline.

### **Take action in your own business**

So, look very carefully at what you are selling now. It is almost certain that you will not be selling the same things five years from now. Not that the product life cycle is fixed for all products - it can vary considerably. Computer items, for example tend to have relatively short life cycles, whilst some services, such as the sale of property and real estate, can remain relatively unchanged for many years. But they will change!

Look at what your competitors are doing. Look at what your customers are doing - and talk to them about their future needs.

The keys to effective product development are information and planning ahead. Neglect them at your peril!

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### 16. Increase Your Sales By Helping People To Buy

By Charlie Cook

Building relationships with prospects and earning their business by staying in touch overtime is a great way to gradually ramp up revenue. But what do you do if you want to make the sale today? Depending on your business, you may not have the luxury of time to sell a prospect or you may want to increase immediate cash flow to complement long-term sales. Everyone's business needs are different..

Barry recently self-published a sales training manual and needs to ramp up sales. George is opening an exercise facility and wants customers right away so he can pay the rent. Martha helps corporations cut costs improving manufacturing processes and needs more clients this month, and can't wait until next year.

Do you need to increase your income this week, and this month?

What can you do today to attract more clients and increase sales?

Here are six ways you can help prospects become clients and customers today.

#### 1. Improve Your Marketing Message

Most people talk about their work and advertise their products and services with marketing messages that don't pull in new prospects. Whether you are selling services or products, the most effective way to attract prospects is by telling them how you can help them.

When you tell people you are a sales agent for a real estate firm, you're only talking about yourself, not what you do for your clients. Ditto when you tell people you've got a sales training manual for sale. To get your prospects attention you need to talk about what you do and your products in terms of solutions and benefits.

If you're selling oranges, which is most likely to get a sale.

- a. "The best oranges anywhere."
- b. "Quench your thirst right now with this organic and satisfying source of vitamin C."

A good marketing message helps prospects understand what you do and why they should contact you. Whether you are selling oranges, real estate, sales training or fitness, write your marketing message from your prospects' perspective.

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## **2. Give People a Reason to Contact You**

Whether you want prospects to email you, call you or come to your exercise facility, your objective is to get them to contact you. When they do, you can go to work and start converting them to client status. How can you prompt a prospect to contact you?

Everyone loves the chance to get something for free. Offer a free report, workshop or consultation. Make sure its something related to what you're selling and that your target market loves. In the last year my free marketing guide has prompted over eleven thousand people to contact me.

## **3. Establish Your Pricing in Terms of Value**

Several years ago I paid a lawyer over thirty-five thousand dollars to write a sales contract. Why? Because it helped me make almost a million dollars. When the company I was dealing with had financial problems, thanks to my lawyer's work, I still received every penny I was owed.

Whether your product or service sells for nineteen dollars or nineteen thousand dollars, your clients buy because they have a clear understanding of how your product can help them and the value it provides. Use your copy, questions and video clips to help people understand how much better off they will be when they use your products and services. When prospects are confident they will get what they want and expect, price becomes far less important.

## **4. Build Credibility**

People buy from those they know and trust. How can you get prospects to know and trust you?

Whether you have been in business for one month or one hundred years, endorsements from others are the most effective way to establish your credibility. Place testimonials prominently in your marketing materials, demonstrate to prospects that you know what you're doing and that your products and services work.

## **5. Start a Conversation to Create Opportunities**

One of the key steps to helping prospects buy is to find out what they need and want. Once you know what their interests are, you can show them the service or product that's the best solution and you're on your way to completing a sale. How can you get the conversation going even if you're not face-to-face with a prospect?

Ask questions. Ask prospects what they need and want and give them a chance to tell you. Even if you're not face-to-face with a client you can use your web site to generate a steady stream of qualified leads by using response forms. Often all that's needed to close the sale is a follow up phone call.

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### 6. Instil a Sense of Urgency

Have you ever put off buying something that you needed or wanted? How can you get your prospects to avoid this black hole of procrastination?

Give prospects clear directions. Tell them what to do when and why. If you want them to fill in a form, tell them how and why to do so. If you want them to buy your book, tell them how and why. If you want them to give you information about themselves, give them a reason. If you want people to make a purchase right away, motivate them with an impending deadline.

Not every prospect will purchase your products or services today, but you can help them along. Use these six marketing strategies to attract more prospects and be more successful.

[Charlie Cook](#), helps service professionals and small business owners attract more clients and be more successful

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### 17. Increase Your Sales At Trade Shows And Exhibitions

Trade shows and exhibitions can be a valuable promotion method for your company, whether they are a big national or international show, or a local one-day event put on by your local Chamber of Commerce.

But they can be expensive (in terms of both time and money), tiring and frustrating.

Here are a few tips which may make your exhibition presence more effective:

1. If possible, go to the show as a visitor in the preceding year. That way you will get a flavour of the atmosphere and be able to gauge if the sort of people visiting are your type of potential customer. If you can't do this, ask the exhibition organiser for a catalogue from the previous year's show, and for a profile of the visitors who attended. The catalogue will help you to identify if your competitors have exhibited there.
2. Ask your existing customers if they have visited or intend to visit the show. If the answer is 'yes' then your potential customers may also be visiting.
3. If you have a choice of stand location, try to get one:
  - a. Near to the entrance
  - b. Near to the bar / buffet
  - c. Near to the toilets
4. Can you man the stand effectively? You can't even do a one-day show on your own. If you are a small business, try to involve friends and family who might be able to relieve you for an hour or so.
5. Make sure that you allocate enough time after the show to follow up sales leads. Don't leave them for more than a week, or the leads will grow cold. Chances are that most of your visitors will have thrown away the literature that they picked up on your stand.
6. Plan ahead. Rule #1 of exhibitions is that "if anything can go wrong, it will"! Be sure to have your "Exhibitor's Survival Kit" with you. This should include everyday items such as sticky tape (double-sided), scissors, screwdrivers, knife (a Swiss Army knife is indispensable), Velcro strips, plain white card, felt tip pens, stapler - whatever you can think of. Chances are that what you need is what you have forgotten to bring with you!

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7. Take 50 per cent more literature (and business cards) than you think you will need.
8. When designing your stand, try to get motion, activity and sound on it to attract attention.
9. Make sure that any equipment you have is spotless. Harsh exhibition lights will show up the smallest bit of dirt.
10. Try to make eye contact with people passing your stand (they will try to avoid it!) When you've got their attention do **not** say "Can I help you?". The answer will be "no". Ask them an open-ended question such as "What are you particularly interested in?". If visitors are wearing name badges, try to glimpse their name before speaking to them, then give them a big smile and say "Hello Mr X...". It works wonders!
11. Try to make time to visit other exhibitors' stands. You can often do as much business with them as with visitors to the exhibition.
12. Never smoke or eat on the stand. And try to avoid sitting down, no matter how much your feet and legs ache.
13. Go easy on the evening entertainment. The biggest prospect you have ever had might appear on your stand at 9 am the following morning.
14. Last, but not least, never once lose your confidence or enthusiasm throughout the whole exhibition.

Exhibitions can be expensive, time consuming and very tiring. But they can also be very rewarding.

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### **18. Increase Your Sales Through Viral Marketing**

Viral marketing - encouraging Internet users to spread your marketing message for you - has been a hot topic ever since the Hotmail email service used the technique so effectively to build its customer base. Every Hotmail message sent carried a one-line advertisement for the Hotmail service with a quick link to the Hotmail site, making it easy for new customers to subscribe.

The result has been dramatic growth in the number of Hotmail users, at a fraction of the cost of other marketing methods. Other companies have invested in creating movie clips to be spread over the Internet in the same way - each carrying their own marketing message.

Viral marketing is simply a technological take on the oldest and most powerful marketing method you can use - word of mouth. A quick look at what makes viral marketing succeed provides a reminder of how you can get people talking about your products and services.

The key is to get the message out. For the lucky few, the message can be embedded in the product itself. Just as each Hotmail message contains its own advertisement, so fashion goods like designer clothing can carry logos. The more customers you have, the more visible your brand becomes - automatically.

More commonly, however, you need to give people a reason to spread the word. In the online world, the focus tends to be on humour: create a funny enough movie clip, and Internet users will forward it to all their friends. In the real world, the starting point is much simpler: give people good products and service, at a value for money price, and the message will spread.

But what can you do to kickstart your own viral marketing campaign? The most obvious (and universal) answer is to send out a regular, content-rich email newsletter and encourage recipients to forward it to their colleagues. It's slow to build but will raise your business's profile. Work hard at the content and make it interesting to your customer base and as useful as possible. Be careful not to include direct sales pitches - people will forward useful information, but they won't knowingly forward blatant advertising.

There are other ways to use word-of-mouth promotion. Sports clubs, for example, often run schemes incentivising existing members to introduce their friends and special offers help capture people's attention. But you must ensure the promotion is cost-effective: if word spreads quickly you don't want to be overwhelmed by new customers taking advantage of your generosity.

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There are also lessons to be learnt in the 'seeding' process used by viral marketers to launch campaigns. A common aim is to reach key opinion formers, in much the same way as a new bar or restaurant might invite selected guests to a promotional launch party.

Some businesses use a similar strategy of targeting a few high profile customers; once they start using your product (or service) you have a far more credible pitch to make to other potential customers. Similarly, online marketers may target relevant newsgroups; the equivalent for your business might be the local or trade press, or a trade association whose members are important to you.

### Frequently asked questions

#### **Where can I see examples of viral marketing?**

The best known viral marketing campaign is Hotmail, but there are numerous other examples.

Friends Reunited ([www.friendsreunited.com](http://www.friendsreunited.com)), a website that enables people to get in touch with former schoolfriends and work colleagues, has gained more than 8 million registered users mainly through word of mouth. Users can browse free, but if they want to contact anyone via the site, they have to pay £5 per year. Even if only 20 per cent take the paid option, that generates revenue of £8 million - all built on word of mouth.

Software company Adobe ([www.adobe.co.uk](http://www.adobe.co.uk)) gives away a valuable piece of software (Acrobat Reader) so that its PDF file format can be easily read on any computer. The strategy has meant that more than 500 million users have downloaded the software and been exposed to the Adobe brand. Plus, the company also supplies software that creates PDFs, which sells for £200. Using viral methods, Adobe has created a demand for a paid-for product by distributing another one at no cost.

#### **Why is word of mouth so powerful?**

Because personal recommendations are far more credible than advertisements. In a neat twist, First Direct has run advertising campaigns highlighting the fact that such a high proportion of First Direct customers come through word of mouth recommendation.

In addition, word of mouth can be extremely cost-effective. While you may choose to run a special campaign (at extra cost), in its simplest form you can get good word of mouth just by providing good products and service.

#### **How do I 'seed' a new campaign?**

This is the most sensitive part of viral or word-of-mouth marketing. Whereas recommendations may spread easily

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among people who know each other, contacting them directly is more difficult. Online emails may be seen as nothing more than 'spam', while it can be difficult to get through when you 'cold call' people you don't know.

On the other hand, it should be relatively easy to start a dialogue with existing customers and people you meet face to face. A little research among your existing contacts may reveal that you do know someone who can get you an introduction to someone you want to talk to. Or you may be able to use special offers or events to get in contact.

### **Are there any risks to incentivising customers to make referrals?**

Paying for referrals can be problematic if it starts to destroy the basis of trust which underlies successful viral marketing and word-of-mouth campaigns. As a rule of thumb, you might want to avoid providing an incentive which is likely to encourage individuals to contact people who are not genuine friends or contacts.

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### 19. Increase Your Sales By Using The Telephone

#### 10 Top Tips

The telephone can be a really powerful marketing and management tool - yet so many people fail to use it correctly. Here's ten powerful tips on how to make winning telephone sales calls.

1. There *are* problems when using the telephone - it's too easy to be relaxed, we can't make use of body language, we know that we may be an interruption, we may lack confidence. Here's a few tips to help you to become more effective:
2. Speak **clearly**. Even if your voice sounds a little exaggerated off-line, telephone distortion will make it seem more like a normal voice.
3. Get a little **hyped up** before you make the call (ignore your colleagues in the same room!)
4. **Don't hold on** if the prospect is engaged - you'll lose your initial enthusiasm. And don't accept any offer to 'phone you back'.
5. Sound great, sound **positive** - but not too far over the top.
6. Keep the tempo going - sound **busy**
7. **Stand up** if you are making an important call. It's too easy to *sound* laid back if, physically, you are.
8. **S-M-I-L-E :-)** ! . You really can 'hear' a smile over the phone. A smile relaxes the throat muscles and your voice sounds warmer. It really does work!
9. Try to **visualise** the person you are talking to. And use visual words in your conversation.
10. Be **decisive**. Don't use words like 'Maybe' and 'I'll try'.
11. **Use gestures** if it helps you. No-one can see you.

#### What if you get an answering machine?

With more people having voice mail systems installed at their desks, there's a chance that when you try to get through to a prospect, you'll get through to an answering machine instead. Here's how to turn this into a sales opportunity.

Judging by the messages that most sales people leave on my voice mail system, it's clear that many sales people regard this as a 'dead call'. All they do is leave their name and number,

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and expect me to call them.. without there being any incentive for me to do so.

What a missed opportunity! Here's a chance for you to get over a clear, concise sales message, without being interrupted! Always have one ready scripted, so you're just waiting for that voice mail announcement. Here's a few hints for a script

1. Make sure that it's got some **clear benefits** with which the prospect can identify.
2. Give the prospect some **evidence of other people enjoying the benefits** - if you can mention a well-known name as your customer, so much the better.
3. Give your telephone number **clearly**, at least **twice** in your message (no-one likes replaying voice mail).
4. Give them a **date and time** when "I'll be waiting for your call" Sound enthusiastic, without going over the top - and speak clearly at all time.
5. Don't forget to **mention the prospect's name** clearly, at least once.

So, get your script ready, and wait eagerly for that first voice mail response!

### Don't forget the TPS

"TPS"? That's the Telephone Preference Service. Individuals and companies can register their telephone numbers with the TPS to indicate that they do not wish to receive unsolicited telephone calls.

If you make an unsolicited sales call to a person or company whose number is registered with the TPS, you have committed an offence under the Privacy and Electronic Communications (EC Directive) Regulations 2003, and could be liable for a fine of up to £5,000.

If you plan to make a number of unsolicited sales calls, you should screen your telephone number list against the TPS register.

For more information, visit the [TPS website](#).

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### 20. Increase Your Sales By Writing An Excellent Sales Letter

Marvellous though the Internet is, it still can't beat a well-written, well-targeted piece of direct mail (see our two feature articles on [Targeted Marketing](#)).

Here's a powerful but easy six-point plan to help you to produce a powerful sales letter to use as part of your direct mail:

1. **What is the objective of the letter?** Think very clearly about what you want the letter to do. If you don't start off with a clear objective, how can you expect the reader to respond in the way you want?:
  - a. Get a direct order?
  - b. Generate enquiries?
  - c. Get a sales interview?
  - d. Get filed for future reference?
  - e. Inform and educate?
  - f. Get the reader to expect a telephone call from you?
2. **Get attention quickly** You have about 5 seconds to get the reader's attention - to persuade him/her to read the rest of the letter rather than chuck it. So use a headline to great effect. Try one of these attention-getters:
  - a. Ask a **how** or **why** question
  - b. Offer a **benefit**.
  - c. Offer a **challenge**.
  - d. Make it **BIG** (but don't go over the top!)
  - e. Make it **relevant** - don't disappoint people by promising something in the headline that isn't justified in the rest of the letter.
  - f. Name a **price** - if that's a major benefit of what you are selling.
3. **Make it easy to read:**
  - a. Keep the first sentence **short**.
  - b. Keep the paragraphs **short**.
  - c. Use wide **margins**.
  - d. **Break up the text** - use indents and sub-headings.

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- e. Write with **one person in mind** - make it personal without being too chatty.
  - f. Get someone else to check your letter for **easy-to-read** appeal.
4. **What benefits will the reader gain?**
- a. Concentrate on **benefits** rather than features all the time
  - b. Make the letter as **personal** to the reader as possible. Talk in terms of *their* industry and *their* interests - again, part of the targeted marketing approach.
5. **Try to build a partnership between you and the reader:**
- a. Talk in terms of the **reader**, not you.
  - b. Avoid too much use of "I" and "me"
  - c. Start with "I", move to "you", and end with "us".
6. **Get the reader to act** in the way that you want them to - don't leave them trying to guess the purpose of the letter. If you want them to read a brochure, tell them. If you are going to phone them, tell them.

No-one has yet written the perfect sales letter that gets results every time. But this six-point plan may help you to write more effective letters.

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## 20 Ways To Increase Your Sales

### 21. Increase Your Sales By Delivering More Than You Promise

Yes – you were promised “20 Ways To Increase Your Sales” – and here’s the 21<sup>st</sup> way!

Giving an excellent service to your customers can be the factor that makes you stand head and shoulders above your competitors. So how do you do it?

Andrew Brown in *Customer Care Management* asks us to imagine the following scenario:

You book your car in for a repair and some routine maintenance. The local garage handles the booking over the phone very well, and agrees to take the car in at 9 am. When you arrive, there's a short wait, but not very long, since the garage has the paperwork ready prepared. They agree to have the car fixed by 5 pm.

During the day, they phone you to let you know what needs fixing and at 5 pm the car is ready as promised, with the bill made out - and no nasty shocks! The interior of the car is clean and the floor and seat covers have been removed. You can tell that it has been well serviced because of the feel of the pedals and the sound of the engine. The repairs that you asked for have all been carried out.

So, asks Andrew Brown, how many marks out of ten do you award the garage for service?

Says Andrew:

*"I would like to suggest that they are awarded zero. They have, after all, simply done what they promised to do. They have fulfilled their obligations to the minimum degree. The only reason why we might be tempted to give them high marks is because most garages don't even reach this minimum level. As a result, our expectations are rock bottom and we are thrilled to receive any sort of service at all."*

Are you giving **your** customers only the level of service that they expect to receive. If so, why not look for ways in which you can *surprise and delight them*. That is one sure way that you can continue to "build a chain of customers" as Richard Schonberger entitles his excellent book. And it's a sure way of keeping competitors away from your valued customers.

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