

Have you ever
thought about...

... nurturing creativity at
work?

Good managers know that creativity is essential for the health and prosperity of the companies they work for.

And, therefore, good managers also know that their single most important job is to nurture creativity in those who report to them.

There are three keys to nurturing creativity:

1. Always acknowledge the importance of those who report to you and their contributions. All people crave recognition and approval and it's a manager's job to make sure that workers get this.

Leaders are responsible for the morale of their departments.

2. Solicit the opinions of everyone in your department. Include everyone in your meeting, from senior members of your team to the mail boy/girl. Take their suggestions and input seriously. You might be surprised who comes up with the best ideas.

3. Allow for completely open communication. Don't prohibit discussion of certain topics and don't shoot down ideas that seem silly or inappropriate. And don't ignore input that you might view as a negative attitude.

If an employee tells you that there is something going on that you didn't know about, don't ignore the problem and don't write the employee off as being a whiner.

Often, it's these kinds of conversations that plumb the well of creativity and can get everyone working towards the right goals.

Even a bad idea can get people thinking and coming up with good ideas that ricochet off the original idea.

Remember that good managers foster creativity.

They don't squash it to feed their own egos.

And they don't ignore input — no matter where it comes from. ■

SOURCE NOTE: adapted from The Leadership Institute's website

SUCCESS TIP

There are several keys for achieving one success after another but the first foundation is an unshakable commitment to personal development. No one is born knowing how to live well. No one is born knowing how to talk or walk or balance a checkbook. But we have the ability to learn. Winners learn the art of living well. They learn to be great parents, great lovers, great listeners, great people. Winners are committed to personal development and that makes all the difference. ■

BUSINESS

ALERT!

Hands-on help that works

Vol 9 No 3

Getting in the front door of prospects — five creative marketing ideas that work

In my father's day, getting a new customer was a big deal.

by Elaine Fogel

ASA TRAVELLING SALESMAN in the clothing industry — and working solely on commission — he knocked on plenty of store doors to pitch the owners or buyers.

Sometimes he got invited in, though there were plenty of times he didn't.

All he could rely on for his first impression was his 30-second pitch, his smiling face and his friendly demeanor. His sense of humor was legendary.

Eventually, he established his 'regulars' and sold them his line twice a year based on the seasons. Many of these customers became his friends and even in seasons when they didn't purchase anything he'd still stop by to shoot the breeze, hoping that the next visit would produce results.

It took him many years to build success. The frustrations he experienced in the earlier years competing against other manufacturer's representatives were tiring and defeating.

Drastic change

In just one generation, things have changed drastically. Lead generation (or prospect research) is scientific, supported by suppliers and list brokers that use technology to the max. Marketing communications channels can include direct mail, email, webinars, whitepapers, banner ads, conference exhibits and many more.

Capturing data and communicating the right information to the right audience at the right time in order to achieve the ultimate prize—to close a sale — is the objective. The long-term goal, though, is to establish customer relationships.

But how can you build and steward a long-term customer relationship if you can't access your prospect in the first place? Reaching those big fish you wish you could call your customers takes some creativity and perseverance, ingenuity, chutzpah and, sometimes, just dumb luck.



Here are five creative ideas that can work for you, getting you in the front door of your next important prospect.

1. Connect via a Hot Line. Cold and warm calling have been around forever. After you get someone's assistant or voicemail for the umpteenth time, it's time for a new approach. Invest in a prepaid phone. Send it to your prospect in a gift box, by courier, with a note to check the messages. (Sounds like espionage, doesn't it?)

Beforehand, leave a really good message that you've written and practised to entice your prospect. Whatever you do, don't talk in a monotone, droning on about your product or service. You've got a captive audience for about 30 seconds. Make the best use of your time. Offer something or provide an incentive to call you right away. Make sure you've pre-programmed your number into the phone's memory.

Be available to answer the call that day. The last thing you want is for your important prospect to get a busy signal or, worse, your voicemail.

1. Go Nuts. Go to the grocery store and buy a variety of nuts. Nuts in shells, nuts in jars, nuts in cans. Pack them in a nice big gift bag with ribbon and decoration. Include a note card that says...

"You're a tough nut to crack."

Include your contact information and why you can help him/her. Then have a courier deliver the gift bag.

2. Guilt with Gifts. Send your prospect a holiday gift. My graphic designer did this one year and I still use her services. This method uses the same psychology as address labels do in direct mail fundraising campaigns. The recipient feels a tad guilty or obligated and takes action.

I received a lovely box of chocolates with a note indicating that she'd like an opportunity to show me her portfolio. No obligation.

(concluded overleaf)

Many inexperienced networkers think networking is just about selling something, but it's more about taking the opportunity to share knowledge and information.

To a lesser extent, it's also about receiving too. It's about many things, including:

- Sharing ideas, information and resources.
- Helping people to meet their objectives.
- Creating opportunities.
- Co-operation.
- Talking and listening.
- Building long-term business relationships.

Here are some tips to help you get more from networking.

Purpose — What do you want from each networking event you attend?

Is it information, feedback, a competitive update, building a rapport with customers, raising your profile, or something else?

Preparation — Take business cards, prepare your introductory pitch, think of topical questions to ask.

You could also read the list of people attending and any event information such as location, start times and names of key contacts.

Keep your promises — Respond to referrals quickly, then give feedback and return phone calls as soon as possible.

If you don't do what you said you were going to do, within a given timeframe, you will probably lose the trust of your contact.

People skills — Make conversation and keep your body language in check.

Smile, listen, ask the right questions and dress appropriately.

Patience — You can't expect rewards to materialize overnight, but if you persist and keep your profile high, the rewards will come eventually. ■

SOURCENOTE: Enterquest



Thomas Long

The way I see it...

The difference between 'good' and 'excellent' is very, very small

BEFORE THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION, we lived on farms and travelled on horseback. Afterwards, we lived in cities and railroads and massive steamships made commerce, education, travel and prosperity possible,

So, what powered the Industrial Revolution?

Water. More specifically and more explosively, **steam.** Even at 211 degrees Fahrenheit, water is not very exciting.

But add just one more degree and something amazing happens! At 212 degrees, you get steam and steam moves mountains!

I'm convinced this metaphor applies to achieving our dreams.

The difference between 'good' and 'excellent' is very, very small. For many people, the difference between being slim and fit, versus gradually becoming heavy and unhealthy may only be a hundred calories per day. Eat even a few more calories than you burn each day and you gain weight. Burn a few extra calories each day and you lose weight.

Sure, optimum health may be more complicated, but it starts with a very small number of calories, maybe only one cookie per day!

This applies to any goal you want to achieve. Remember the old saying, "inch by inch, anything's a cinch?" The opposite is also true. "Yard by yard, everything is hard."

High achievers know that small differences make all the difference.

The Industrial Revolution changed

everything, and it began with only one degree of additional heat applied to common, everyday water.

Boil the water, channel the steam and you've got a locomotive to change the world.

What small differences will you make this week? Perhaps you'll make one more sales call, or prepare a bit more thoroughly for your next presentation?

Whether in golf or sales or in the more "mundane" things like parenting, the top performers are rarely dramatically better. Typically, they are "ordinary people doing ordinary things, extraordinarily well."

This week, do a few ordinary things just slightly better. I think you'll see an extraordinary change in your results. ■

Brain storming

SEEK COMMITMENT. People feel less loyal to employers now — but can still be committed to a team or project and to their professions. To foster commitment, emphasize tasks and outcomes, not functions and procedures ... build the best teams for tasks from internal workers, temporary hires, consultants and external suppliers ... provide all information and training needed to do the task well ... create a reward structure including a share in the profits from successful projects.

SOURCENOTE Bernard Henry, in *Better Managing*

GETTING IN THE FRONT DOOR OF PROSPECTS — FIVE MARKETING IDEAS THAT WORK — Concluded from page 1

How could I refuse? It turned out that she was talented, so I gained an excellent designer (in addition to a couple of pounds).

4. They'll Eat It up. Send your prospect a catered lunch. I did that many years ago when I was trying to get the attention of a record producer. (I was a singer then.) Find out what s/he likes and ensure s/he's in the office the entire day, if you can. (Call the assistant ahead of time to find out when a good time is for a delivery.)

Make arrangements with an appropriate caterer or restaurant and pay by credit card so you have a record. Drop off a handwritten note to accompany the meal. Always say why you're writing and include a call to action, whatever that may be. In the case of the record producer, he called me. Of course, I'm not the famous singer I thought I'd be, but I got results that day.

5. Play with Words

Do some research on your prospect. Find

out his/her likes, dislikes, hobbies and interests. For example, let's suppose she's a tennis player. Buy a case of tennis balls and wrap the box in shipping paper. Make sure to place a business card inside, along with a greeting card that uses a play on words to gain attention:

"Hello, Harry. It takes a lot of balls to get your attention. Now that I have it, all I ask is for 20 minutes — that's all. In 20 minutes, I'll show you how your company can save..."

Call in advance to find out if he is in the office. Don't do this if he's on vacation, out of town, or off sick. If you don't get a call back that day, follow up the very next morning.

Getting in the front door of prospects can work well with the help of technological bells and whistles. But, sometimes, for the important ones, you need a little creativity to stand out, command attention and make them smile.

All you're hoping for is a chance — an opportunity to meet in person and get in that front door. The rest is up to you. ■

SOURCENOTE: Elaine Fogel is president and CMO of Solutions Marketing & Consulting LLC (www.solutionsmc.net)

THERE'S AN OLD SAYING that "it's who you know that counts" and, for better or worse, it's often true.

Yes, there is a cynical aspect to the phrase, referring to favoritism that is unfortunate.

More often, however, people get the referral or the promotion precisely because (in a positive sense) of "who they know." Knowing and liking someone makes a difference.

When it comes to networking, however, I've noticed two unfortunate patterns that are generally NOT helpful:

First is the person (to be honest, it's usually a male) who views networking as some strange contest to see who can trade the most business cards in the shortest period of time. In extreme cases, there's an uncomfortable energy that is a huge turn-off. Their quick handshake, exaggerated smile and exchange of business cards is usually a waste of time.

The second is the person who attends networking functions but fails to connect in a meaningful way. Often they spend the entire time chatting with a friend and leave without meeting anyone new, or making any lasting impressions.

Effective networking means connecting with a few people in an honest, sincere way that suggests you would like to help them if you can, and would appreciate the other person's support in exchange.

Get to know people. Call them up, go to lunch and, if appropriate, certainly exchange business cards! But what you're looking for is a relationship.

Get to know a few people well, rather than collecting dozens of cards from strangers. Follow-up with a phone call.

And, for goodness sake, if you can, be sure to send some business to the other person.

Nothing will grow your own referral business like the gratitude of people who have benefited from your genuine support. ■

SOURCENOTE: Dr. Philip E. Humbert

Security...

Are your staff a security threat?

Most companies now have an IT security policy in place and many have implemented technology to police this. But employee use of the internet in and out of work could pose the biggest threat,

COMPANIES UNDERSTAND the need for IT security provisions but many let themselves down by failing to enforce good behavior among employees, according to the 2008 information security breaches survey.

The report, which was carried out by a consortium led by PricewaterhouseCoopers, found that companies are increasingly employing more technology to counter IT threats.

The number of companies that have a security policy has also doubled over the last eight years, the research revealed, with 86% of large companies logging and monitoring staff access to the internet and 81% blocking access to inappropriate websites.

But despite these efforts from businesses, many companies are worried about staff behavior while on the internet, for example on social networking sites such as Facebook, Bebo and MySpace. Some firms cited examples of confidential business information being placed online on such sites.

The survey also revealed that staff are being increasingly targeted by social engineering attacks, where outsiders attempt to obtain confidential information about employees.

Employee use of the internet in work time

is now becoming widespread. Over half (54%) of companies now allow staff to access systems remotely, up from 36% in 2006, while the proportion of businesses restricting internet access to some staff only has dropped from 42% to 24%. Only 9% now give staff no access to the internet.

And while 53% of large businesses now employ strong (multi-factor) authentication for their IT systems, only 14% of small companies do so.

"Having a security policy alone does not magically improve security awareness among staff," said Chris Potter, partner, PricewaterhouseCoopers. "What companies are realizing is that increasing security awareness is only part of the answer.

"The critical issue is changing the behavior of their people. A 'click mentality' has grown up where users do what expedites their activity rather than what they know they ought to," he added.

"It is a bit like the road speed limit; everyone knows what they ought to do, but only a few actually do it. Only when behavior changes do businesses realize the benefits of a security-aware culture." ■

SOURCENOTE: press release

...And insecurity

If, at first, you don't succeed...

Don't fall into the trap of thinking irrationally.

IF YOU'RE ONE OF THOSE PEOPLE who worries a lot about work and has high anxiety about displeasing people in charge of you, then you might want to put all that negative thinking to good use.

What really is the worst thing that could happen if you displeased your boss?

Could it really be all that bad?

For instance, what if your boss really yelled at you at work in front of all your peers; would it really kill you? It might humiliate you but, remember, you're in charge of how you feel and, though your initial reaction would probably veer toward shame and embarrassment, you'd probably get through the experience unscathed.

But what if you did get fired?

Well, first ask yourself how likely it is that this would happen. It's probably pretty unlikely that you would get fired for inadvertently displeasing your boss.

But if you did, you could possibly find another job that you liked better.

Trying to imagine the worst-case scenario should help you get in tune with whether you are slipping into irrational thinking. Discovering that you are thinking irrationally is the first step in stopping something that robs you of the focus and energy you need to work in top form. ■

SOURCENOTE: adapted from NAKED AT WORK (AND OTHER FEARS) by Paul Hellman

Depression

Are you feeling blue?

IF YOU'RE DEPRESSED or feeling blue three or four days a month, you're normal.

That's the finding of a recent study by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Experts there say that mood disorders can seriously impair the quality of a person's life but that feeling a little depressed around three days a month is well within the realm of what most people experience.

The study surveyed 166,000 people about their feelings of depression. Young people reported the highest number of days of depression; people who stay active seemed to be able to hold off depressive feelings.

The less income, education and opportunities a person had was reflected in the number of days that people reported feeling blue. ■

The Institute for Independent Business

FOUNDED IN 1984 in the UK, the Institute for Independent Business (IIB) is now one of the world's largest international networks of business advice providers.

As of 30 April 2008, 5,197 carefully-selected men and women had been accredited worldwide as IIB Associates.

Experienced professionals

Experienced senior business people in their own right, who have elected to become self-employed business advisers, Associates and Fellows of the IIB have received additional training to enable them to focus accurately and cost-effectively on the needs of clients and prospects.

This ensures that Associates' clients receive the "practical advice that works"—the Institute's motto in every country in which the Institute operates. ■

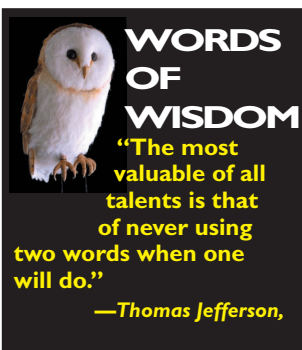
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Communication

Keeping your customers

Some people argue that in today's price-driven world, there is no customer loyalty.

LET'S FACE IT, people go where they get the best deal. By that we don't mean the cheapest prices, but the best value for their money.

Just because your customer bought from you once, don't be fooled into thinking they will buy from you a second time.

Competition has become fiercer with the rise in consumer choices. It's hard to find a market — large or small — that doesn't already have multiple competitors battling for their piece of the pie.

So how do you keep your customers coming back time and again?

To answer this important question you need to take a moment and think about what would keep a customer coming back for business. Three instances come to mind:

- The customer and the business have a positive relationship. In this instance, the customer has formed a positive relationship with either a person who works for the business or with the business itself. Perhaps they had a great experience and they now have an emotional bond with the business. Unfortunately, unless the emotional bond is nurtured, it fades away fast and, quite frankly, there are extremely few businesses that nurture their relationships with their customers.

- The customer has an incentive to continue the business relationship.

People are human and because of that we are naturally greedy. The principle of greediness is what makes capitalism successful. Businesses that reward (bribe) their customers with coupons, points, credits and bonuses create an incentive-based relationship that crumbles once the incentive is taken away.

- The customer 'has' to continue the relationship because the cost to change is too high. There is an instance in which the business has tied its operations into the customer's life or business so closely, that to move to another product or service provider would cause damage emotionally, socially, operationally or financially. An example of this type of relationship would be a person who is emotionally dependent on their therapist (emotional) or a customer who has bought computer software that isn't compatible with other hardware (operational).

This is like an 'integrated relationship' because it extends into the life of a person or into the operations of a business.

Of the three types of integrated relationships (emotional, operational, financial), the operational relationship is the most powerful. Operational relationships exist when the actual work processes of two businesses overlap. Untangling business processes is a mess and always has a very high-switching cost. ■

SOURCENOTE: Enterquest

Meet the Publisher

SOLID OAK CONSULTING FOCUSES on Chicago-based small business growth.

Growing a small- or medium-sized business is a challenge in an environment where 80% of business startups do not last 5 years.

How To Grow? Growing a small business successfully not only requires increased sales, but profitable sales. To do this, all elements of a business need to work as a finely tuned system. This requires skill and coordination of management, finances, operations, people, marketing, sales and overall change.

Why Grow? Growth should not be an end in itself. After all, aren't you growing your business in order to sell or transition it someday? Chicago has many businesses in transition, should yours be one?

Business Advisor Managing this overall approach to business growth for a small business or a medium-sized business often requires an outside perspective. Someone with no agenda or vested interest in the business: a business advisor.

Small Business Growth through consulting is our business.

Helping your acorn business grow into a solid oaksm.



Brief and to the point

Go ahead, take a chance

HAVE YOU EVER HAD an opportunity that seemed like a long shot slip through your fingers?

The following story about U.S. poet and writer Langston Hughes is a good illustration of why you should take advantage of any opportunity that comes your way — no matter how small.

Hughes was working as a busboy in a hotel in Washington, D.C. While he was working, Vachel Lindsay, a well-known poet of the day, stayed at the hotel. Lindsay was in town for a reading tour.

While the poet was eating his breakfast one morning, Hughes approached him, laid copies of his poems on the table next to Lindsay's plate and left without saying anything to the poet.

The next day Hughes picked up a newspaper and read that Lindsay had announced that he had discovered a significant new voice in poetry.

The veteran poet had read some of the novice's poems at the reading the night before.

Hughes reported to work at the hotel for his shift and when he did he was mobbed by photographers and reporters.

Hughes went on to live a life of great literary success. ■

SOURCENOTE: adapted from BARTLETT'S BOOK OF ANECDOTES

For more information,

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