

In This Issue

[One Minute Ideas](#)

[Consistent Action in a Purposeful Manner is the Key to Networking Success](#)

[Increase Your Sales by Going for the "NO."](#)

[Scrap Your Sales Techniques and Turn Yourself into a Trusted Advisor](#)

Quick Links

[Visit Our Website](#)

[Workshops](#)

[About Us](#)

[Contact Us](#)

One Minute Ideas

Achieving Potential

August 2010

In this month's edition of our monthly newsletter "Achieving Potential," we focus on developing more relationships through networking. Relationships lead to referrals and referrals lead to sales.

Invariably, when I work with business owners or executives in organizations, they list two of their three to four critical goal categories as marketing and sales. They cite generating more referrals through networking as one of their key goals. Here are some useful ideas.

Next month I am doing some free seminars for organizations on "Filling Your Sales Funnel" and "Increasing Sales Through Networking." Please contact me if your organization is interested.

Consistent Action in a Purposeful Manner is the Key to Networking Success

While most people don't want to hear it, the key to success in networking is consistency. Nothing will replace consistent action in a purposeful manner. You must plan your networking success and work your plan consistently, making adjustments as you go to ensure you are getting the most for your efforts.

Most of us have heard of someone who came to his or her first networking event and met a great prospect that became a client.

Many have even heard of someone who has done business at a networking event. Perhaps you have had the good fortune of meeting someone who was in



5 DO's for an Effective Business Referral Network

- 1. Be Visible and Well-liked.**
 - 2. Join and contribute to worth-while groups and causes.**
 - 3. Keep adding new circles of influence and expand the range of your interests.**
 - 4. Reach beyond your profession for business connections.**
 - 5. Make sure your business connections run both ways. Referring clients must make business sense to both sides.**
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need of your product or service and you closed the business at the event. It does happen.

But patience and perseverance are required in networking as in most every other endeavor in life. Consistency is the key to success. Joining a health club doesn't make you healthy. Once you join you have a greater likelihood of going, and once you go you have a greater likelihood of using the equipment. Using the equipment doesn't ensure health either. It is the purposeful use of the equipment in the proper fashion and proportion consistently that ensures improved health.

Networking is very similar. Joining a group increases the likelihood that you will attend a meeting or event. Attending increases the likelihood that you will actually engage in a conversation with another attendee. Engaging in conversation increases the chances that you will meet someone who could use your product or service. But the purposeful planning of which meetings and events to attend and whom you wish to meet, coupled with the diligent execution of that plan, will ensure that you are successful in networking and in your business endeavor.

The old saying, "who you are speaks so loudly I can't hear what you are saying" applies in networking. While your appearance plays an important role, how often you appear at events is critical. People will begin to know, like, and trust you when they see you more often. This increases the odds that they will remember you when they meet someone who needs what you sell.

Therefore, you should plan out your networking for the next six weeks and stick to it. Measure your success at each event and determine if the right connections are attending the same events you are. Be honest with yourself. How well did you connect? How much did you give each event? What impacted your results?

Be sure to visit each event or group more than once before you decide to fully engage or eliminate it from your plan. Then be decisive. Choosing a few events or groups to fully engage in each month will bring far better results than taking a shotgun approach. You'll begin to see the same people and they will see you as reliable. Then they will open up their contact list to you. This is when networking becomes powerful. Remember, meeting people and doing business with them individually is great, but the real power comes when you gain access to their contacts and referrals.

Networking success requires a plan and that plan requires consistently attending events and meetings and measuring your success. When you fully engage and consistently attend you will find better relationships, better use of your time, more referrals, and greater success. Be consistent.

Source: Glen Gould is a business growth and networking expert who works with Fortune 100 companies and chambers of commerce to grow their business through effective systems and word of mouth marketing.

Increase Your Sales by Going for the "NO."

Neither you nor your employer can make any money unless a prospect says "yes." However, getting prospects to say "no" can be equally critical to your success. How is this possible? I'll answer that question by asking two more questions:

1. How many of the prospects in your sales opportunity pipeline say things like, "Let me think about it," and "Call me back in a couple of weeks to check in."

2. Do you really think these are truly SERIOUS prospects? If you do, you are only kidding yourself!

There are many reasons why prospects may be reluctant to tell you "no." Here are just a few of them:



- Many prospects are nice people that don't like to disappoint others. They know telling you "no" will disappoint you. So, they avoid disappointing you by stringing you along. Eventually they ease themselves out of the situation by no longer returning your calls.*
- Prospects may think they have the clout required to sell your product or service within their organizations, only to find out that they don't. It would be embarrassing for them to admit this to you. So, they string you along to "save face."*
- Prospects may find they are unable to come up with the funding required to pay for your product or service. Yet, they know you have invested a lot of time, energy, and resources in an effort to help them fix specific business problems. They think you may get mad if they tell you the truth. So, they tell you "maybe," or "let me think about it."*
- Prospects are afraid that telling you "no" may cause a confrontation or encourage you to "hard sell" them in a last-ditch effort to salvage the sale. So, they string you along to avoid getting into an uncomfortable situation.*

So, how do you "get to NO?"

The first step in getting to "no" is explaining to your prospects right up front that "no" is a perfectly acceptable answer! The conversation you have with a prospect might sound something like this:

"Bob, as we explore the possibility of working together, we may

decide there isn't a fit between what your company needs and what I offer. If that happens, to avoid wasting each other's time, are you comfortable telling me 'no'?"

Once a prospect agrees they are willing to tell you "no," you have a powerful weapon you can use to jump-start stalled opportunities and minimize wasted time. How does this weapon work? Well, if you ever feel an opportunity may be stalling, or if a prospect has not returned your calls or e-mails for a week or two, put your cards on the table by saying (or writing in an e-mail) something like this:

"Bob, the last time I heard from you was on (date). Is (product or service name) still on your radar screen? Remember, 'no' is a perfectly acceptable answer! I don't want to waste your time or mine, and I don't want to be a pest. Please let me know whether I should continue calling you. Thank you!"

My experience has been that, if a prospect is serious about acquiring your product or service, they will ALWAYS respond to this kind of communication. If they don't respond, it is a strong indicator they are not serious. You have little to lose by scratching these non-responsive prospects off your call list and removing them from your sales opportunity pipeline.

Conclusion

If you want to be a top-performing salesperson, you need to view your time as your most precious resource. After all, time is a salesperson's only inventory. If you fritter away your time on prospects that can't or won't buy, how will you ever achieve your goals?

To earn the greatest return on your time investments, go for the "no." Tell each prospect right up front that "no" is a perfectly acceptable answer. Then, if you ever suspect an opportunity is stalling, or if a prospect stops returning your calls, remind them that "no" IS an acceptable answer. Giving prospects permission to say "no" gives YOU permission to stop wasting your time!

If you stop investing your time in prospects that can't or won't buy and instead use that time to find and work with truly qualified prospects, you will be rewarded with a significant increase in sales!

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About the Author*

Sales performance expert Alan Rigg is the author of How to Beat the 80/20 Rule in Sales Team Performance: A Step-By-Step Guide to Building and Managing Top-Performing Sales Teams

Scrap Your Sales Techniques and Turn Yourself into a Trusted Advisor

Top sellers are more like trusted advisors or success mentoring experts than salespeople. They believe in the products and services they sell and they believe in the company they represent. They believe in themselves, and, above all, they believe in offering honest, high quality service to their clients.

One way of thinking about the art of selling is to see it as a process in which belief in a product or service is transferred from the seller to the buyer. If you believe in and are enthusiastic about the products or services you are selling, then the AIDA model becomes much easier to apply.

The acronym describes the sales process in four stages: Attention, Interest, Desire, and Action.

If you have problems selling, it is likely that you have failed to hit the mark in one of these areas. Prospects buy because they are persuaded that some feature of your product or service will be of benefit to them in a way that is significant enough for them to feel good about the purchase and justify it to themselves.

So what are the benefits that are most likely to stimulate desire and enable the client to justify the purchase?

It will save money or make money for the client. It will save time or speed things up and be more convenient or productive than current solutions. It will improve or restore health or fitness. It will offer security or protection. It will boost the customer's popularity, respect, personal magnetism, or make the customer feel fashionable.

When a prospect or client consults you, it is your job to find out what the client needs and which of these benefits you can assist with. If you can link the benefits that your product or service offers to the needs of the customer, then it won't be difficult to make an honest pitch for business. Equally, if you do not have a suitable product or service that will meet the client's need, then it is actually better for you as well as for your client if you do NOT try to close a deal.

The reason for this is that your position as a trusted advisor is one that you will have spent a lot of time and effort building up, yet it takes no time to destroy such a reputation. Trust is a most valuable asset to possess, so if it would be better that your customer does not buy from you on a certain day, then saying so and explaining why will increase the trust that your client places in you.

If your clients trust you, will never need to "sell" your product or service. What's more, you'll be on such good terms with your client that it will be easy for you to ask for referrals, or people who might be interested in your particular offer. So,

instead of trying to convince your prospects to buy from you, engage them in a discussion that focuses entirely on them and their needs and then make some suggestions about the best solution for your client. Once you grasp this powerful "sales secret" and begin to focus your enthusiasm on helping your client rather than on achieving the sale, you will have the potential to become a super salesperson-without even trying!

About the Author: David Hurley is an Internet marketer who focuses on success mentoring for Internet marketing start-ups. You can also get a free subscription to David's popular Internet marketing newsletter and download SIX bonus eBooks FREE!!

Motivational Quotes

"To be successful at networking, you have to give, give, give" - Jill Konrath

"Most salespeople try to take the horse to water and make them drink. It's your job to make the horse thirsty!" - Gabriel Siegel

"It's not who you know, it's who knows you"
- Unknown

For results you can count on, contact Performance Development Strategies, LLC at 914-953-4458 or Email: grant@pdstrategies.com

Make it a GREAT day,

Grant Schneider
Performance Development Strategies, LLC
