

6 Ways to Increase Your Customers

By Joe Gracia

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1. STOP DOING THE ONE-STEP:

95% of the advertising used by small business owners is based on the One-Step strategy.

The marketing piece tries to sell the product or service in one, quick and easy step. There's a description of the product, perhaps a picture of the owner, with a brief description of the product. There may be a few bursts about how long they've been in business, how many awards they've won, etc. At the bottom of the ad, flyer, e-mail or letter is a phone number with the line 'call for more information.'

Few people respond to these types of One-Step ads. They are huge money wasters. If you're doing the one-step, you already know they don't work -- stop using them immediately.

2. DO THE TWO-STEP:

People buy things they want from people they know, like and trust. You can't get people to know, like and trust you in a One-Step ad.

Instead, use the Two-Step strategy.

Step One, attract hundreds, even thousands, of prospects by offering free information. In other words, use your initial marketing as a lead generator, not a sales generator.

Step Two, build a Prospect List of follow-up information -- name, address, phone, e-mail, etc. -- from all of the prospects that responded to your first step, and follow up with them repeatedly with enticing offers.

It sounds like a simple idea, and it is. But while it is the most powerful marketing technique available, few business owners use it.

With just this one technique we have helped our clients double, triple even quadruple the size of their businesses.

This simple tactic has helped us grow our home-based, Internet business from nothing just two years ago, to well over \$100,000 a year. Our goal of \$200,000 per year will probably be achieved over the next 12 months. And it has all been done on a shoestring budget!

There's no reason why you can't do the same thing. Maybe your goal isn't to make a hundred thousand a year from your small business. That's okay. Perhaps you just want to make a few hundred extra dollars each month. You can use these step-by-step systems to make any amount you want.

It doesn't matter what kind of business you have. The simple strategy and systems work for service businesses, product based businesses, home-based businesses, Internet businesses, even traditional brick and mortar businesses.

3. RE-INSTATE PAST CUSTOMERS

One of our clients had lost hundreds of customers over the years. They just stopped coming back. We helped him write a simple, one-page letter telling his past customers that he missed serving them and would really like to have them back. He included an Appreciation Gift Certificate. Within 4 weeks, 20% were coming back to his business regularly again. It didn't take much -- he just let them know that their business was important to him.

4. DO A JOINT VENTURE

Team up with someone who has the same types of customers as you, and do a joint venture. We helped a real estate agent put on a Home-Buying workshop with a banker, and they both generated new customers through the effort.

You could do a joint mailing with another business to share the costs. If you both have a customer list, she could endorse your products or services to her customers, and you could do the same for her. You both would gain new customers from each others lists.

5. FOLLOW UP MULTIPLE TIMES WITH YOUR PROSPECTS

We have had many clients that were throwing away thousands of dollars a year in sales by simply failing to follow up with their prospects.

They assumed that if their prospects didn't buy the first day they called for information, that they weren't worth any more of their time and effort. What a waste!

We taught one client how to capture the names and addresses of her prospects who called for information about her service, and put them into a computer database.

Then every month, she printed labels from her database and sent all of her prospects a flyer telling them about her latest offers. Her sales went through the roof!

She learned a powerful lesson about people. We are not all ready to buy at the same time. Some prospects buy immediately. Some need to be reminded of your product or service offers two or three times, and still others may not be ready to buy until you have followed up with them 8-10 times!

If you give up after the first contact, you are losing up to 80% of your potential sales. And you're not just losing the value of their initial sales, but you're also losing the combined value of their future sales!

We enter every one of our Prospects into our database -- that's over 45,000 prospects so far -- and we follow up with them all, several times a month with our free newsletters. Some of our prospects become customers after just a few follow-up newsletters, but most buy after receiving 8 or more. If we didn't follow up over and over again with our prospects, our sales would be a fraction of what they are.

Don't ever throw away prospect names and addresses, because they haven't purchased after one or two follow-ups. When they are ready to become customers, you want to be sure that you are uppermost in their minds.

6. ATTRACT NEW CUSTOMERS WITH FREE SAMPLES

Free samples are everywhere. When you watch a preview of a new movie, you're receiving a free sample of that movie. Imagine Hollywood trying to sell movie tickets without providing us with those free sample scenes!

A local popcorn vendor gives away small sample bags of his caramel popcorn at summer festivals -- 60% of the samplers turn around and get in line to pay for the full size bag!

A dental restoration client of ours was hesitant when we recommended that he give away a free \$100 dental restoration to prospective dentists. But since we knew that

his restorations were superior to his competitors, we knew that many of those dentists would switch to his company as their primary restoration supplier, after sampling his work. He made the offers, and they loved his work. He doubled his business in less than 12 months.

These are marketing tactics that any business can begin to apply immediately. Make a commitment to start growing your business today, and you may be amazed at where it will be a year from now.

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