

Entrepreneurial Traits that Drive Sales

By Sharron Senter

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Frequently overlooked and hidden deep within our marketing tool box is the ultimate marketing vehicle for your business – you! Many small business owners are so busy figuring out how to increase sales and revenue they forget to grow themselves as business owners. If you aren't evolving yourself, aren't you being counterproductive to your business development? Marketing our businesses isn't just about what ads to buy or what networking event to go to next; it's about us as people, as entrepreneurs. The following marketing traits are often overlooked by entrepreneurs but are pivotal to your long-term success. What's more, they cost very little yet earn a savvy entrepreneur a lot.

Show Your Personality -- Customers want to know who you are. That's great that you offer the fastest tax services in town, or your gift baskets can be custom-made and delivered anywhere in 24 hours. But who are you? Your customers and prospects want to know. Especially if you're facilitating business on the Internet, building trust is key to making a prospect feel comfortable buying from you. One of the most effective ways to build trust is to express your personality.

How can you express personality? Even conservative introverts can develop indirect methods of exhibiting their personalities. Here are some examples -- If you own a store, at the entrance, try displaying a professional portrait of you and your family and your personal story describing how your business began. If you're an attorney, try displaying a small 8.5" X 11" picture frame on your desk that describes your background, your personal interests and hobbies. If this is too personal for you, try displaying a few photos on your office wall, including the photo of you rowing in college or the one that depicts your fabulous smile playing soccer with your six-year-old. If you're not the smiling-type, a human interest photo showing you in a common setting will help put your prospect at ease. Ultimately this person will see the photo of you and your son above your shoulder and think, "He's a dad too. He knows what I'm going through." When you allow your customers and prospects a "peek" at who you really are, they'll begin to feel more comfortable and able to express their needs, an incredible competitive edge. You'll see a notable increase in sales as customers identify more with you.

Use Your Fear -- One of my greatest fears is having to return to the workforce. I've been self-employed for almost three years. However, I didn't just one day decide to start a business. Although I'd always dreamed of working for myself, the dread of failure held me back. It wasn't until the company I worked for was purchased by another and I was laid off that I decided to launch my business. I use this same fear to push me to succeed. As you know, fear can freeze an entrepreneur right in her tracks. I've seen it time and time again. Fear can consume us, keep us from making any marketing decisions at all. Rather than wrestle with your fear, acknowledge it, let it

push you to where you need to go. Use it to make marketing decisions, rather than no decisions at all. It's better to have several failed marketing programs than none at all.

Smile and Applaud -- Whether you have employees or you're a one-person show, it doesn't matter. You must smile at and applaud the people within your network including employees, associates, vendors, friends and family. When you say "thank you," "please," "nice job," "I love the design you did for me," "I really appreciate your waiting for that report," "thanks for delivering it," "It was nice meeting you," "I enjoyed your presentation," you leave a positive lasting impression on people. As a small business owner, you can't afford to miss out on what I call, "moments of positive impressions." These moments accumulate over time. Before you know it, you've created a positive reputation for yourself. Smiling and applauding are fairly easy traits to acquire and can be the competitive edge you need to separate you from the stuffy entrepreneur down the street.

Keep Away from Certain People -- Nothing will stop you dead in your tracks faster than someone who's "questioning" your entrepreneurial instincts. I'm not saying ignore these people altogether, because they may have a good point; however, don't stop doing what you're doing just because people don't completely support your ideas. Many of these naysayers are employed by someone else. How could they understand or support your ideas? They're on a completely different life track than you. They can't possibly understand what it's like to have to be responsible for making your own money. Surround yourself with other successful-minded people who have to make their own money.

Stay Focused -- You must stop flip flopping with your marketing ideas. Pick 10 of them, and repeat them continuously for more than a year. Pick a direction and stick with it!

About The Author

Sharron Senter is a New England-based marketing consultant, speaker, writer and founder of Senter & Associates, a marketing communications firm that helps small businesses deploy low-cost marketing strategies. Sharron is best known for her free weekly emailed marketing tips, found at <http://www.sharronsenter.com>. She is also the author of several marketing reports that illustrate affordable ways to grow a small business including "14 Image-building Dos & Don'ts."

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