

How Are You Growing?

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What are you doing to actively grow your business? If you're like most people you probably engage in a variety of business-building activities on a regular basis. You make some cold calls, visit potential customers and, perhaps send out information or advertise in trade magazines such as this.

Let me ask you...how consistent are your efforts?

In many cases, small business owners and even larger businesses forget to market and promote their business every single day. Emergencies happen, customer service problems arise or we get caught up in the details of operating our business.

When our business is thriving we tend to drop or reduce our marketing efforts. We get fooled into thinking that we no longer need to market or we just become so busy we have trouble fitting it into our daily or weekly routine. Unfortunately, this can lead to a false sense of security. Then, if we lose a major client or two, we scramble to replace the lost revenue.

The frequency with which you market and promote your business will have a direct impact on your overall success. That means you should be doing something every single day to actively generate new business. In fact, if you truly want to succeed, you should involve yourself in at least five different marketing activities every day. Sound like a lot? It is and isn't.

It is because it means you need to change your routine. You also need to make the time to determine what types of marketing are best for your specific business. What works well for one person may not be the best approach for someone else.

It isn't because not all marketing strategies take a lot of time or effort. Making calls doesn't necessarily take much time, providing you plan your calls, set aside a specific amount of time for them and don't procrastinate.

Think of some of the worlds most recognized brands such as Sony, McDonalds, and Microsoft. These conglomerates are constantly marketing themselves. Obviously, they also have deep pockets to be able to afford high visibility advertising but, they all started out as a very small company with only one or two employees. They were aggressive in promoting themselves and they were relentless in seeking out methods to create that brand awareness.

As a small business owner you may be thinking, "It's easy for them; they have a marketing department, big budgets, and lots of resources (people) to execute." Here are seven low cost marketing strategies you can easily incorporate into your daily routine:

1. Ask for referrals. Contact your existing customers and ask them to introduce you to someone they know. A gentle, non-threatening method is to say, "If you've

been happy with my service and know someone who could benefit I'd appreciate it if you would connect us."

2. Join associations where your prospective clients meet. Be selective and be active in the group. Simply joining an association does not guarantee new business. However, if you are active in the group you will raise your profile.
3. Follow-up. The majority of business people do not follow-up with the people they meet or with prospective clients. Set yourself apart by becoming a master of follow-up. Send cards, thank you notes, or, at the very least, an email.
4. Respond promptly to ALL calls and email correspondence. In today's fast paced business world, people want FAST results. Separate yourself from your competitors by responding quickly. My company standard is to respond to all correspondence within 24 business hours.
5. Send your customers a regular newsletter with tips on how they can improve their business. If you have access to email this can be done quickly and easily. Just be sure to ask their permission BEFORE you add them to your distribution list. I issue a weekly sales tip called the "59 Second Tip" which offers people one selling strategy every Monday and it takes less than one minute to read. Visit my website if you are interested in subscribing.
6. Train your staff to handle any customer situation with tact, diplomacy and professionalism. People want to do business with professionals.
7. Plan your cold calls. Develop a script for them and rehearse your script until it is perfect. I have tried cold calling with and without a script and have found that a well developed script works much better than just speaking the words that come to mind.

You do not have to have a university degree in marketing in order to promote your business effectively. However, you do need to do something every single day!

***Kelley Robertson** is the author of "Stop, Ask & Listen. How to welcome your customers and increase your sales." Kelley helps businesses maintain their competitive advantage by teaching them how to increase their sales, develop their negotiating skills, and motivate their employees. His web site is www.KelleyRobertson.com and he can be reached at 905-633-7750, 1-866-694-3583 or at Kelley@RobertsonTrainingGroup.com.*