

People Skills Important When Building a Customer Base
By Caryn Amster, Marketing Coach-sultant™
From The Business Ledger Publication

Recent writings tell us what we have always thought – [people buy people](#).

Today, alliances are formed based on people’s knowledge about each other and sustained by how much they like each other. Today’s customers often make decisions based on a supplier’s level of communication and human relations skills.

To create the best strategic alliances, get to know more about the people. Businesses are often called upon to make quick decisions. This is when relationships really count!

How good are you at telling customers and prospects that [you are an EXPERT](#)? How adeptly can you create a relationship before you try to sell something? What relationship marketing tactics can you use to really get to know customers and prospects?

I suggest the following relationship marketing strategies to help set you apart.

Why you and who cares? Why do people do business with you? What do your satisfied clients tell you they like about you? What do your testimonial letters say? Ask yourself who cares about what you offer.

Testimonials

We often don’t think to ask for testimonials, but they help you learn a lot about what is important to customers. Sharing those comments helps create new relationships.

Your networking introduction – a quick exercise

Your name is not the most important part of your business introduction. [The customer is listening for WIIFM \(what’s in it for me\)](#). They are looking for solutions to problems. So create a relationship right away. Try Putting Your Best Mouth Forward by perfecting a relationship-building 30-second introduction with this exercise.

What one compelling thing would you say to someone in a networking situation to convince them to use your services? Remember, you only have 30 seconds. Start with a question. “What have you tried to speed up your accounting process?” Then offer a solution. “Well, I offer a service that, etc. etc.etc.” and then close with “Wouldn’t that help your business?”

Use a short story describing how you helped a client in a similar business or use one of those great comments from a customer’s testimonial. Examples like this help prospects visualize what it would be like if they used you.

Now identify yourself and your company, and open the door to get them thinking about how you can solve their problems.

In 30 seconds, you can often persuade someone to want to get to know you better. Remember to use real language; because buzzwords can often baffle those not in your business and baffled people do not make decisions.

Relationship Marketing Tactics

What you don't say can hurt you. We often assume that current customers know everything we do. As you add new services make sure to tell current customers. Nothing is worse than hearing a customer tell you he just bought something you offer from someone else because he was unaware of what "else" you do.

You are the expert in your field, so you are a reliable resource for the latest industry trends. Talking trends and sharing industry statistics makes you the person who cares enough to inform people and a reliable resource they can call for news.

Use your photo everywhere. Don't you want to go where everybody knows your face and your name?

Speak up and speak out. Using public relations shows your expertise and your willingness to share information. I suggest public speaking as the best way to share yourself and ideas. Consider audio taping your talks to share with businesses or prospect's employees. Internal teams often make business decisions, not just the boss. Add the audiotape to your web site allowing visitors to experience you more personally.

That impersonal telephone can start a real relationship.

Your incoming phone message can tell callers about what's new, invite them to your trade show booth or speaking engagement. The message you leave should be more personalized than "call me back".

Remember, by showing people you care about them as well as their business, they will care about you, and you will create business using relationship marketing.

"My goal is to consistently give business owners the best and latest tips, tricks and information on marketing their business," says Caryn. Custom Marketing Associates, started in 1988, is a business-to-business marketing, advertising and public relations firm located in Elk Grove, Illinois. Amster's second business, The Marketing Coaches, specializing in speaking, training and consulting on marketing, direct mail, customer service and trade show issues, was started in 1990. For information, contact Caryn at (847) 895-6449, e-mail Caryn@MarketingCoaches.com and see the site at www.MarketinCoaches.com.