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PRINTtips



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Selling Today... Same Basics, Different Tools

Things are getting very confusing in today's sales environment. While the fundamentals of connecting with customers and prospects remain the same, the ways of doing so are changing. New skills are needed, but the time to acquire them is limited. The pressure to change is constant, but there is little guidance on how change should take place.

In this issue of Printtips, we'd like to offer our take on the situation. While not denying that change is the order of the day, we believe a little common sense about it all will help bring some order to the chaos.

Sales fundamentals

No matter how much things change, the fundamentals remain the same. So let's review some basics of the sales process.

- *Fundamental #1:* People buy from those they know, like, and trust. The buying decision is based on relationship.
- *Fundamental #2:* To build trust, get to know your customers and prospects. Focus on helping first, selling later.
- *Fundamental #3:* A prospect will trust a referral coming from someone they know. Referrals take the burden of prospecting from the salesperson, so ask your customers for referrals.
- *Fundamental #4:* Show your trustworthiness by providing excellent service and exhibiting ethical behavior in selling and servicing your customers. This is the basis of a long-term relationship with a customer.



- *Fundamental #5:* Prospecting is the first and most important step in the selling process. Prospecting consists of identifying potential customers and qualifying them. A qualified prospect has the authority, desire, and money to make a purchase.
- *Fundamental #6:* Prospecting requires a strategy and the tools and skills to carry it out. Part of the strategy is recognizing that prospects are not all alike, and tailoring the prospecting approach to their preferences.

What's different today

Prospecting begins with identifying potential customers. What is different today than in the past is the amount of information that prospects share about themselves, the control they wish to exert over the selling process, and the window of opportunity for providing information to prospects.

A time-honored and effective way to identify prospects is to profile your existing customers.

Selling Today... Same Basics, Different Tools (continued)

“With social media, it is possible to get much more intimately acquainted with prospects.”

“Prospects today expect companies to make it easy to do business with them...”

“All direct mail pieces should include an offer and create a sense of urgency.”

See if there are clusters of customers in industries or types of businesses types, in geographic areas, or sharing common characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, household income). Then buy a mailing list that mirrors the profile.

What's next is what's new: conduct some research on the prospects using the same tools and techniques that they are using to check out your business. With a search engine, locate the suspect's business on the Internet. Is there a web site or a Facebook page for the business? With social media, it is possible to get much more intimately acquainted with prospects. What additional information is available about the business (the type of business, its mission, and who its customers are) and the prospect?

Now pause. This research garners the same information that is usually gathered on the initial qualifying visit to a suspect. Only now, it can be done without having to convince the suspect to see you – a definite benefit of using a new tool.

Having additional information also plays well into a new expectation – that the first approach will offer much more focused information, tailored to the specific needs and requirements of the prospect. Prospects today expect companies to make it easy to do business with them, and to provide information, answers to questions, products and services much more rapidly than before. Dr. Joe Webb, a founding partner of PrintForecast.com and an industry consultant, calls the requirement ROT – return on time.

Using post cards for focused marketing

Using direct mail marketing to reach prospects and introduce them to your company, products, and services is another time-honored and effective way to prospect. The new twist is to use post cards rather than elaborate enveloped mailings and to include interactivity as part of the design. A post card campaign that directs the prospect to a web site or personal URL (PURL) is far more effective in satisfying the prospect's need for information and in keeping control of the sales process.

Send a post card with a great offer, and make the response device a PURL, a QR code for additional information, or a discount coupon, and you'll drive visitors to a place where they can be identified, counted, and tracked.

Designing an effective post card-to-web direct mail piece

One significant benefit of a post card is that it doesn't have to be opened for the sales message to be viewed. In the past, the limited amount of space on a post card compared to an enveloped direct mail marketing piece was seen as a disadvantage. By including an interactive link on the post card, that limitation disappears.

When designing the post card, consider what the viewer will see first. This is usually the side of the post card with the address, so design this carefully. Your goal is to immediately attract attention and stimulate interest – the first two steps of AIDA (attention, interest, desire, and action). Use a bold visual element – a photograph that bleeds off the top and sides of the post card, combined with a provocative headline – at the top of the post card. The address panel can be placed along the bottom part of the post card. It does not have to be positioned on the right half of the card.

Use the side with the address to create enough interest to cause the reader to turn the post card over, where he will find the QR code or PURL. You can include the *desire* and *action* steps on this side of the post card, or only hint at them, leaving the reader to find additional information via the web link where there is more room to be persuasive and more opportunity to use text, photos, videos, and other tools.

Make an offer and create urgency

All direct mail pieces should include an offer and create a sense of urgency. The offer is the incentive the prospect needs to take the next step – to visit your web site and identify themselves. A common way to do this is to ask a visitor to register as a condition of eligibility for the offer.

Selling Today... Same Basics, Different Tools (continued)

Finally, create a sense of urgency so the prospect will act now rather than waiting. Here is where a QR code, especially one leading to instant gratification such as a redeemable coupon, has great advantage. It is quick and easy, taking just a few minutes of the prospect's time. If properly constructed, the prospect may find it easier to respond immediately and move on rather than setting the offer aside for action later.

Don't throw the baby out with the bath water

Today's sales and marketing environment is evolving as marketers learn how to apply new technologies to the fundamentals of selling. But using the new technologies doesn't have to be an either/or thing. Blending what has worked in the past with new tools that satisfy today's prospects is the key to sales and marketing success.

"...the prospect may find it easier to respond immediately and move on rather than setting the offer aside for action later."

The Rule of 45

James Obermayer of Sales Leakage Consulting offers the Rule of 45 to predict when a business-to-business sale will occur after a prospect makes an inquiry.

- Within 3 months, 10-15% of B2B prospects will buy someone's product.
- Within 6 months, 26% will buy someone's product.
- Within 12 months, 45% will buy someone's product.

This simple rule emphasizes the importance of follow up to all inquiries. If a marketing campaign results in 100 inquiries, then on average, 45 sales will occur within 12 months. Since it is impossible to know which 45 out of the 100 will buy, then all 100 inquiries must be followed up until they either buy or decide not to buy.



"... inquiries must be followed up..."

Paper and the Environment

Does using paper for a direct mail campaign harm the environment? Decide for yourself after you read about the Hanna family, tree farmers in Gifford, South Carolina.

Harry Hanna's grandfather started buying land in the Low Country in 1890. His forests provided a steady supply of raw material for his small mill, which produced lumber for families and businesses in the surrounding rural community. Over the years, the Hannas acquired a lot of land and continued to grow trees; the family now owns 20,000 acres.

Managing the 20,000 as a tree farm has had real benefits for the environment and the local economy. What was once cleared farmland that

failed to produce a healthy yield of row crops is now a vibrant forest with pine trees four stories tall. Land development has been held at bay. And the tree farm generates revenue for the Hanna & Hanna family business and its workers.

Before reflexively choosing e-marketing over traditional direct mail because of concerns for the environment, consider this:

- *The raw materials for paper are renewable.* 1.7 million trees are planted every day, more than three times what is harvested.
- *Electronic devices contain dozens of minerals and metals, including gold, silver, and palladium.* Electronics have become the fastest-growing waste stream in the world.



"Electronics have become the fastest-growing waste stream in the world."

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“QR codes may direct the reader to a web site, a personalized URL (PURL) landing page, a video, or a social media page.”

Q. *What are the benefits of using a QR code in my printed material?*

A. QR (quick response) codes – the 2-dimensional bar codes widely used in Japan and Europe – are beginning to appear in display ads and other printed media in the United States. QR codes may direct the reader to a web site, a personalized URL (PURL) landing page, a video, or a social media page.

Here’s the benefit of using a QR code on a printed piece: the QR code makes it simple for the reader to go from the printed piece to the Internet using the camera feature on a smart phone.

Essentially a QR code adds a live link to a printed piece that is analogous to a clickable link in an online message.

Consider incorporating a QR code into your next sales brochure or sell sheet. We can create the right QR code for the application and incorporate it into the printed piece for maximum impact without adversely affecting the design. For more information, contact us at 513-248-2121