

11 WAYS TO DOUBLE YOUR CUSTOMER BASE IN FOUR WEEKS

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Double the volume of business clients or customers within a single month by following simple but highly effective steps to generate leads and successfully convert them into paying customers. The secret to a truly successful business lies within a keen understanding of the needs and desires of the market – and it is ultimately individual people who constitute that market. By connecting to those who want the products and services offered and communicating consumer benefits to them, businesses gain new customers and clients. But the problem faced by many entrepreneurs is that they either fail to define their potential customers or they lack the skills, resources, and strategies necessary to forge valuable relationships with them. Promotion is essential, and a focused and effective marketing plan to promote one's business can easily double the customer base within four weeks. By following a few tips and engaging in some time-tested initiatives, the process can be both easy and lucrative.

Here are eleven tried and true methods for adding new customers in record time:

#1) Build a Loyalty Ladder to Create “Raving Fans”

Loyal customers are ideal customers. Those loyalists who sometimes refer others to the business are even more valuable because they are active advocates. But the most prized clients and customers of all are those who become so energized about the level of service they receive that they cannot stop telling others about it. These “raving fans” are a golden asset and a tremendous source of new customers. If a business makes a concerted effort to identify loyal customers and then offer them such a high level of service that they become cheerleaders for the business, the investment pays off many times over by expanding the customer base with premium customers acquired via raving fans. For a company to rise to this level of appeal requires an intentional effort to personalize each transaction and aspect of the customer service relationship. Rather than offering a preferred customer a standard discount coupon, for instance, a business owner might instead offer them tickets to a golf tournament or symphony, deliver flowers or a gift basket to them, or pamper them in other special and memorable ways. The investment in service should be calculated based on the value of the business that the raving fan brings to the company. Customer service is thus elevated to become an incentive and rewards program tailored to the individual client. When others who are advocates witness this kind of VIP treatment they will likewise become inspired to rave about the business in order to enjoy the exclusive benefits of this preferred customer relationship.

#2) Identify a Target Market for Direct Mail

Direct mail campaigns work best for reaching a consumer demographic that is defined and identified as a focus group. Unlike broad methods of advertising that hit everyone within a given geographic area, direct mail is intended to arrive at the doorstep of those consumers who are already known to be great candidates for products and services. To clarify the demographic, it may be helpful to know, for example, basic information about the recipients such as their age, gender, income level, buying habits, and place of residence. Mailing lists of people who meet specific criteria can usually be purchased for a premium from direct mail companies, clubs and organizations, and survey companies or other brokers who make money by collecting and sharing demographic data. But the least expensive – and often most effective – way to generate

an appropriate mailing list is to hold a giveaway contest. Those who submit their mailing address on an entry form are obviously interested in winning that product or service, so this helps to pre-screen them as potential customers.

#3) Create a Referral Program

Design a referral program that rewards customers for bringing others into the customer base. Referral rewards can be in the form of discounts, gifts, invitations to special events, or “closed door” sales events where only certain customers are invited to participate and take advantage of savings, exclusive products, or other preferred customer perks. A referral program can borrow ideas and schemes from the raving fan concept, but will be executed in a simpler and more general fashion. Many customers have friends, coworkers, and family members who require the same products and services, so referral is a natural process of growing the customer base by using existing customers as a resource for community outreach.

#4) Weed Out Bad Clients and Cater to the Best

Contrary to popular belief, it is sometimes advantageous to lose customers if the business owner deliberately orchestrates the loss. Prioritizing the kinds of customers a business prefers to have makes it possible to eliminate those who create unnecessary headaches and detract from better serving other, more valuable customers. And it also allows a company to focus on attracting those desirable customers who represent the bulk of the business and contribute most to the profits. Losing those who are a liability – for example, the five or ten percent who are the worst customers – is actually an asset that can help increase the number of customers in the profitable database. Identify who the best customers are by applying the “80-20” rule which states that 80 percent of a company’s business comes from 20 percent of its customers. Treat those customers particularly well and invest extra energy in satisfying their needs while extending service above and beyond the call of duty. They form the core of the customer base, and by cultivating them it is possible to create more customers who are similarly extraordinary, loyal, and lucrative. Birds of a feather flock together and the needs of the best customers will always be the same as the needs of the best potential customers the organization is trying to attract. Learn to cater to those needs and those kinds of clients. Then the customer base and net profits will grow automatically in a healthy and more rewarding direction.

#5) Create Strategic Business Alliances

By partnering with other businesses with which there is a common customer demographic but no actual direct competition, a company can expand its customer base quickly and easily. Those customers who trust other businesses and have proven their loyalty to them will be inclined to follow their recommendations or perceived endorsements of an alliance partner – which is why corporate sponsorships of major events like auto races and concerts are so common. Locate businesses that share the same philosophy, style, and corporate culture or personality. An upscale realtor partnering with a refined home decorating gallery makes sense, whereas an alliance between a stockbroker or luxury boat dealership and someone operating a pawn shop or payday check cashing store is unlikely to benefit anyone involved. By choosing good alliances it is possible to build all sorts of creative campaigns to increase the customer base. Advertise jointly, throw a party or event together, team up to support local charities, or give preferential treatment to customers who also do business with strategic partners. The alliances are a form of networking that shares the common goal of growing each other’s customer base because two heads are often

better than one. A professional image consultant might team up with a clothing boutique, a spa, a luxury automotive dealership, a catering company, and a travel agency. Nobody in that scenario is in direct competition but they are all fueling each other's customer database with pre-qualified and pre-screened leads. It is a "win-win" situation for the businesses and also for their shared clientele.

#6) Use Radio, TV, and Newspaper Advertising

Getting the word out through mass media is often the only thing necessary to vastly increase the number of customers, but many businesses devalue this kind of effort because they are not willing to pay for advertising or they don't understand how it can help. Consulting with local media outlets is sometimes an enlightening process because those organizations thrive based on an understanding of demographic advertising. For instance, while a business owner may not see the overall picture, an advertising rep from a local radio station will – and can help to design and implement a successfully tailored and pinpointed campaign. Unless the ads succeed, the media organization fails so they have a vested interest in ensuring that kind of success. For those businesses that are on a tight budget, classified ads in local newspapers are an easy way to enter the local ad market. There are also many neighborhood papers - professional newsletters, trade journals, and other publications that offer strategically targeted ad opportunities. Another affordable but effective tactic is to use press releases. A restaurant might announce changes to the menu, a car dealership might notify the press about new models about to be unveiled, and a law firm might announce the promotion of an employee or the opening of a new satellite office.

#7) Train and Support Employees to Improve their Skills

Valued employees – are ones that business owners invest in to help them further their careers and skills by developing a sense of ownership and responsibility that can boost a business' customer base dramatically. Employees come in contact with people every day, both inside the place of business and elsewhere. Someone might be a potential customer because they walk through the door, but it may take a certain level of professional skills to convert them into paying customers. Or an employee might attend a church or school where there are dozens of potential customers. By helping that employee learn the skills needed to promote the business to those contacts, it is possible to capture new customers. But employees need attention, guidance, training, education, and incentives. They might profit from attending sales or marketing workshops, for instance. Wine reps for major wineries often travel to Europe to learn more about wines – at the company's expense. Hair salons send stylists to conventions to learn new tricks of the trade. Construction companies send carpenters and electricians to night school to get advanced certifications. But these investments all pay off when those employees return and land lucrative new accounts, do a better job, or are able to charge customers a higher rate for more specialized service. Invest in those who are within the business, and the investment will pay off by bringing new customers from outside the business.

#8) Improve the Conversion Rate for Leads and Contacts

Keeping tabs on leads or sending contacts costly mailings can be a drain, not an asset. As leads and contacts are made, they need to be converted as soon as possible into customers. Otherwise they can simply become a nuisance and a labor-intensive list of names. Once someone becomes a lukewarm lead, it is important to warm them up so that they become a hot prospect and then a loyal customer. When someone walks into a party and doesn't know anyone, they are inclined to

turn around and leave. But a good host or hostess knows how to spot them, introduce them, show them around, and help them enjoy themselves. The same holds true for businesses that are converting strangers into loyal customers. Conversion requires getting to know the person, understanding their wants and needs, and then fulfilling those in a way that is mutually beneficial by helping the customer while giving profit to the enterprise. There are many conversion strategies and techniques, and these can be systemized so that once a new contact enters the leads database, they are automatically cultivated and nurtured to become a paying client. If the current conversion rate is 20 percent for every 100 contacts or leads, that translates into 20 new customers a month. Boost conversions to 30 percent and that represents a 50 percent increase. Convert 40 percent instead of 20 percent and the customer base has effectively doubled without doing any extra marketing or advertising.

#9) Convert a Single Customer into Multiple Customers

One of the easiest ways to increase the number of customers is to concentrate on those already in the database. This kind of conversion is often just as lucrative – but far less expensive – than trying to drum up business from cold-calling those who have never stepped foot in the store. By up-selling or cross-selling, for example – profits can multiply in a variety of ways and across a number of different directions or product lines. Sell a customer a premium version of the standard item they are already buying and it turns a mediocre customer into a top-tier one. Introduce them to other products in the lineup or convince them to purchase other services and it is just as good as landing a new customer. For those customers who are on a limited budget or have other considerations that may be keeping them away, try a down-selling approach. If they can buy a less expensive item instead of leaving to go buy it from a competitor, it has the same bottom line effect as recruiting a brand new customer. Eventually – thanks to the savings they make by doing business at a price point that is within their means – they may upgrade or expand their purchases to become a more valuable and lucrative customer over time.

#10) Go Online and Drive Traffic to the Brick and Mortar Location

Create a website and it will act as a customer magnet that never sleeps and a business presence that extends around the entire world almost overhead-free. Give site visitors something valuable in exchange for them providing more information about themselves. Concentrate on getting contact info or a commitment to pay a visit in person to an offline storefront or place of business. They sign up on the site or visit the store, for example, and are rewarded with a discount, contest entry, or a free consultation or service upgrade. Make incentives irresistible and continue to emphasize a call to action, otherwise Internet surfers will never convert into useful leads and real customers. But keep it simple so visitors are not intimidated or tired out by the process. Rather than asking for extensive information, for instance, just get mail and email addresses so that follow-up can be done through other methods and means. Attract 10,000 visitors to the site per month and convert only one percent of them and that will add up to more than 1,000 new customers per year. Convert 10 percent and 1,000 new customers will show up within the first four weeks – an astonishing result that is entirely plausible and achievable.

#11) Increase Visible Exposure

Brand recognition is powerful, and we live in a visual world of shapes and colors that are constantly competing for our attention. Capitalize on visible exposure at every possible opportunity and it will soon increase the customer base while strengthening the brand. Don't use

generic shopping bags when it is possible to put a business logo and tagline on them. Give away beverage coasters, key chains, and coffee mugs that double as promotional items. Put up signs, buy uniforms with logos on them, or paint delivery vehicles with advertising messages. Look for every chance to come out from the shadows and be seen, because the more a business is seen by potential clients, the greater is the chance for that business to double its customer base in a short period of time.

Following Up to Take Full Advantage of Marketing Momentum

Once a business manages to recruit customers, it is important to maintain consistency through ongoing marketing campaigns that strengthen the relationship, expand upon it, and further respond to the wants and needs of those customers. The investment necessary to find, identify, and attract a new customer is much greater than the energy and effort that is required to retain an existing customer who will reward the business with loyalty, referrals, and greater profits over multiple transactions. Neglecting to follow through and preserve “top-of-the-mind awareness” once it is accomplished is a common mistake made by business owners, and it is a costly one. Even the largest and most recognized brands in the world – that enjoy the most magnetic marketing momentum and dominant market share – continue to run successful campaigns to keep customers and constantly add new ones to their database. Otherwise those customers will be lost to competitors. Once a customer shifts loyalties it is twice as hard to win them back because the business has to compete with not only the general market forces but also with the specific strength of that new bond and relationship with the competitor. Breaking that bond of loyalty and luring these lost customers back can be an uphill battle, so it is imperative that the end of the initial four-week strategy be viewed as the beginning of a lifelong relationship. Most importantly – since profit is the ultimate goal and should always be the primary benchmark – recognize that vibrant relationships with customers are dynamic and symbiotic. Every customer a business counts as its own actually represents the potential of many other customers and customer transactions. Good customers are the best advertising, for instance, and they can also contribute many times over to the bottom line through increased frequency of transactions, higher average dollar amounts on those sales, greater total revenues and margins, and higher net profits.