

SALES AND SERVICE

Excellence

THE MAGAZINE OF TEAM LEADERSHIP

MAY 2009

**Boost
Trust**

**One Minute
Marketing**

Sales Success

Keep 10 Commandments

**Contagious
Leadership**

**Monica Wofford
Consultant**



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Sales and Service Excellence

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SALES/SUCCESS

Long-term Sales Success

Learn and keep the 10 commandments.



by Ken Rogner

GREAT SALESPEOPLE KNOW that the secret to long-term success is building relationships of trust. You earn trust and build relationships by following a 10 golden rules—or commandments.

Five Commandments for Trust

Here are five commandments for building trust in sales:

1. Never intentionally exaggerate or lie to a customer. Err to the conservative; don't guess. If you don't know if a product can meet customer's needs, say so; then dig into the details until you know the correct answer. Particularly in the early stages of building strong relationships, one bad decision can jeopardize a relationship forever.

2. Go for the win-win deal. There is no "good deal" for you unless it is also a "good deal" for your customer. It has to work well in both directions. It's why we call it *partnering*. Remember that everything critical is about trusting each other 10 years from now!

3. Become an expert at every product and program. Sometimes the "need" is difficult to uncover because your customer doesn't know that a solution

even exists. The customer is happy with the current supplier and current way of doing things until you show some new technology or service that uncovers that unknown need. Building trust is enhanced by the intelligent introduction of profitable alternatives that your customer has not been aware of.

4. Ask good questions to determine what the real needs are. This is the best



way to make sure you are not proposing a solution that doesn't really work long-term and help to build the all-important *trust factor*. Develop your questioning skills that have a legitimate sequence and end up with all parties knowing what the correct choice is.

5. Create long-term value for your customer. When you ask questions and

build a friendship with customers, they can be completely honest and open with you about their needs and wants.

Commandments for Relationships

Here are five more commandments that help to create those friendships:

6. Spend time with your customers outside of work to build friendships.

People buy from their friends. Consider using travel incentive programs to build enduring friendships!

7. Create your own "loyalty" programs for your customers to spend time together. Find non-work things that you have in common—things that can build into a strong friendship bond with your customer. You might consider sports, hunting, fishing, cars or boating? Look for photos in her office and ask questions that help to find common interests. Remember that your goal is to spend time with each other in a non-work environment.

8. Respect your customer's time. Never ask questions about things that you could easily learn in advance. In an Internet and Google-world, you have no excuse for lacking common knowledge. Wasting time hurts relationships and destroys friendships.

9. Be considerate when scheduling meetings. All leaders have hectic

CONTENTS

MICHEL NERAY	
<i>One-Minute Marketing</i>	3
FRANCIE DALTON	
<i>Thrive in Down Times</i>	4
LINDA RICHARDSON	
<i>Leads, Leads, Leads</i>	4
SCOTT JEFFREY	
<i>Are You Killing Creativity?</i>	5
LANDY CHASE	
<i>Unpaid Consulting</i>	6
GEORGE HEDLEY	
<i>Care Equals Cash!</i>	6
BRIAN SULLIVAN	
<i>Business Success</i>	7

LINDA BISHOP	
<i>Create a Profit Powerhouse</i>	8
WENDY WEISS	
<i>Boost Sales Results</i>	8
DANIEL BURRUS	
<i>Boost Trust Factor</i>	9
MONICA WOFORD	
<i>Contagious Leadership</i>	10
SAM PALAZZOLO	
<i>Influential Sales</i>	10
BRAD SUGARS	
<i>Do You Need Coaching?</i>	11
RON PRICE	
<i>Acres of Diamonds</i>	12

DAVE KAHLE	
<i>Got Relationships</i>	12
JOHN MARIOTTI	
<i>Grow Your Business</i>	13
WOLF J. RINKE	
<i>Negotiate Salary</i>	14
SCOTT GINSBERG	
<i>Be Approachable</i>	14
HOWARD HYDEN	
<i>8 Powerful Financials</i>	15
TOM SANT	
<i>Selling Effectively</i>	16
PAUL SLOANE	
<i>Innovation Strategy</i>	16

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schedules, but you might make it a breakfast or luncheon meeting. Everyone has to eat, and it's chance to learn about your customer and build a strong relationship. Breaking bread together is still a powerful relationship-builder. Make the most of it.

10. Care about your customer's success to build a strong friendship-relationship. Caring begins when you know what her real goals are and act to help them happen. Real goals may have nothing to do with the business but revolve around family, health, retirement plans, or other goals. When you discover those goals, you can create a true friend and build a true relationship.

Obedying the 10 commandments of trust and relationship building is a great way to insure success in sales. When times are challenging, stick to the 10 commandments!

Now, Present with GUSTO

The key to giving a presentation to a group of customers or one-on-one, is the GUSTO with which you deliver it. Beyond having enthusiasm and energy, GUSTO stands for five presentation ground rules:

Genuine. Being genuine only works when you understand the audience. I try to learn as much about my audience (or customer) as possible in advance. I hope to know their age, experience, personalities, positions, and priorities. Then, if I can "put myself in their shoes" and approach the subject matter from a position they understand and appreciate, my communication and connection are stronger. I am more genuine to them when I approach the subject from their perspective and with their goals in mind. When possible, I try to use real-life examples to show relevance to them.

Unconventional. Do something unexpected and unusual to open the presentation—something that delivers the "hook" and wows the audience or has them waiting to see what comes next. There are dozens of ways that you can create an unusual opening that gets your customers' attention and holds it. Is there a shocking bit of news that ties to our current economic distress and to your audience? Use it. Can you ask a question that poses a real challenge for them? Use it. Can you open with a shocking statement that addresses their competitive situation? Use it. You get the idea: if you want to get and hold their attention during your presentation, you have to do something out-of-the-ordinary and unconventional first.

Specific. Being specific, you might walk into the audience and ask questions of individual attendees to draw them into the presentation. You want to establish common



ground before you propose changes for the future, changes in the approach to new business, changes in the process of acquiring new business, or changes to the product. Getting the audience to participate is critical. Remember: adults retain a very small portion of what they hear, a slightly larger portion of what they see, but 90 percent of what they do. So, involve them. Asking specific questions about the customers' past and helping to focus them on future goals and dreams is the way to make your presentation specific to your customer's needs.

Timely. Being timely is about two things: making sure the audience can see the need for a new and contemporary way of doing business and also that something has to happen quickly to adapt to change in the marketplace. *Timely* is about presenting statistics and examples to show that a new generation of consumers are more sophisticated in their methods of learning and information-gathering. *Timely* may also include a list of things that must happen quickly for you to have a positive impact on your consumers. I don't share any of my own qualifications until this point in my presentation to add credibility.

Make sure that when you make a presentation to one person or 1,000, it focuses on what has to happen now to get the desired results in the future. Every presentation needs to end with an action plan—a clear list of things that need to be addresses so that goals are reached.

Orchestrated means ensuring that everything goes smoothly and all elements of the presentation blend together. Every presentation has to look smooth to be effective. I arrive early to check the venue, ensure that my equipment is compatible with the AV equipment I am using, that the seating arrangement works, that my handouts and visuals are striking, colorful and professional. Does the hand-out tie to the slide presentation in look, color, and feel? If I ask the group to participate in an exercise, I make sure they have everything they need to participate. And I rehearse to make sure I can make all of my points in the time allotted. In every presentation, rehearse it in front of a mirror or a friend. Arrange your presentation so that everything flows smoothly. If you have handouts, determine when to share them. Don't let the handout take the attention away from your presentation. Think it through and rehearse it often.

Making a successful presentation is all about doing it with GUSTO. **SSE**

Ken Rogner is a senior sales management consultant and educator. Call 708-205-6721 or email 3resources@comcast.net.

ACTION: Make sales presentations with GUSTO.

One-Minute Marketing

What's your essential message?



by Michel Neray

PICTURE THIS. YOU'RE OUT having a coffee with a friend. An acquaintance of your friend happens to walk in and sits down for a few minutes to chat.

After you finish talking about the weather and last night's sports scores, the inevitable question comes up: "So, what do you do?"

You've got 60 seconds to talk. What do you say? If the best you can muster is sales manager or consultant, (or lawyer, or accountant, or whatever), then you've just blown a golden opportunity to find your next client.

After all, everyone is either a potential client for you or in a position to refer a potential client to you.

Symptom of a Basic Problem

So does that mean you have to be in "sales mode" all the time? No, especially if you think that being in sales mode means being pushy and aggressive.

But if you can't articulate in a compelling manner who you are, what you're especially good at, and why anyone would want to do business with you, then the problem is worse than just blowing an opportunity to get a new client when you go for coffee.

Entrepreneurs, consultants, emerging companies and most salespeople are between a rock and a hard place when it comes to how you describe your business or introduce yourself at a networking event!

To start with, there's no way you can sum up everything you do in a neat little phrase. And to make things worse, once people know what you do, they lump you in with a half million other people who, on the face of it anyway, appear to do the same thing!

But if you can relate to those challenges, you should recognize it as a symptom of a fundamental and hugely critical sales and marketing problem. Chances are, the same uninspiring non-sales arguments permeate your entire business—on your Website, in your brochure, and in your advertising.

To prove it to yourself, take a look at your website as well as the websites of some of your competitors. Do you see

anything that engages your audience and speaks to their interests? If you're like most businesses, the answer is *probably not!*

Four Things You Can Do

Here are four things you can do to get at your essential message:

1. Throw away the rulebook. The biggest reason why people have so much trouble with positioning and articulating a compelling message about their business is that they are working from somebody else's rulebook. No doubt you've heard very specific instructions on the "correct" way to create a positioning line, or the



"correct" way to write an elevator speech or infomercial. And, of course, everyone knows that you have to focus on high level benefits and avoid negative statements, right?

Well, aside from very few universal principles of communication, it may be all wrong (for you). What might have worked for someone else has no guarantee of working for you. And besides, if you use the same rules as everyone else, then you end up sounding like everyone else—and you're back to square one. Instead of trying to apply someone else's rulebook, wouldn't it be more valuable for you to figure out the set of rules that work for you? How? Once you throw away the rulebook, you can do three other things.

2. Go to networking events. If you think that networking events are for collecting business cards and finding new business, you've just found another reason to throw away the rulebook. The most valuable thing you can take away from a networking event is not a bunch of business cards, but rather all the research you could be

accumulating on your essential message. Think of a networking event as a giant focus group that you could use to discover what resonates most with people about your business and what the true value is about what you offer. As you work the room, emphasize different aspects of your business. Ask a lot of questions about the kind of service the person you are speaking to would like to receive. And most importantly, pay special attention to the reactions you get. If you truly listen, you might be surprised by what people find most interesting and appealing about your business.

3. Ask your best clients and customers. Clients aren't usually shy about telling you why they like doing business with you and what attracted them to you in the first place. If you're shy about asking them, get over it—or hire someone else to do it for you.

Tell your client that you need their help to understand your business better. Be clear that the purpose of getting together isn't about asking for new business or referrals, although new business and referrals often result from these kinds of meetings.

And be prepared to probe. When they tell you that they like the quality of your work, ask them what they mean by *quality*. Keep asking "why?" "how come?" and "what do you mean?" to get the specifics that weren't obvious to either you or your client before. That's when you know you've surfaced the hidden value you provide. Remember, what may seem as "no big deal" to you may in fact be extremely valuable to your clients.

4. Lighten up. A big part of getting your essential message is allowing more of you to show up in everything you do. That simply won't happen if you're too serious or overly concerned with appearing *professional*. No matter what you do to improve your sales and marketing messaging, however, it's important to keep working on it.

Unless you have your essential message right, it doesn't matter how many salespeople you hire, how many ads you run or brochures you send out, or how many people view your Web site. You won't get the results you need to move your business forward. The bad news is that it's not as simple as copying someone else's formula.

The good news is that it works. **SSE**

Michel Neray is the creator of The Essential Message, helping turn more people into prospects, and more prospects into sales. Visit www.EssentialMessage.com.

ACTION: Hone your marketing message.

Thrive in Down Times

Apply 14 tips for sales success.



by Francie Dalton

IF YOUR THOUGHTS ARE FEAR-based, you envision the worst for yourself and business; if your conversations focus on bad news, you're seriously impeding your own success. Instead of giving succor to all the negative blathering, take three actions to improve revenue:

1. Don't pick up the phone unless it's to generate business! Be disciplined about generating business as Job 1. Any activity that doesn't secure new business should be delegated, or done during non-business hours.

2. Virtually stalk your prospects. Describe your ideal clients. To what organizations do they belong? Join them. What publications do they read? Read them. What events do they attend? Attend them. Differentiate yourself. Learn about prospects. Research them.

3. Work backward to move forward. You likely know how many qualified prospect meetings it takes to generate one client, and average sale per client. With this information, you can control how much you sell each month. Determine desired sales volume, then conduct twice the number of qualified prospect meetings to achieve it.

4. Invite scrutiny. Whose acumen or success do you admire? Whose clientele does your product or service complement? Invite these folks to be your *Advisory Board*. Meet quarterly. Boards impose scrutiny and accountability. To get unbiased, unemotional, tough truths, don't include friends and loved ones on the board.

5. Your pipeline is your lifeline—never stop prospecting. Keep your pipeline full! When you're flush with business, realize that if you wait to prospect until you need new clients, it will be tough to achieve results.

6. Lag before you bag. The lag time between your first meeting with a prospect and closing the sale is an essential ratio for managing your productivity. The sales you bag today likely began at least three months ago!

7. Play the numbers: networking is imperative. Networking is a numbers game—play to win. Do it regularly and do it well. Focus on helping others.

8. Don't pander—ponder! Showcasing your wisdom without probing

causal factors is insulting. Instead, honor the complexity of client issues. Ask about their goals, frustrations, hopes, and struggles. Construct a matrix of options, and cite the advantages and disadvantages of each.

9. Prepare to bend by predicting the trends. Monitor relevant trends, and anticipate forces that could affect the trends to foresee and adapt to emerging trends before your competitors do.

10. Don't defer getting referrals. Ask satisfied clients to provide referrals. Once you've delighted them, learn what they valued most and draft a brief testimonial for them to edit.

11. Publicize or perish. Publish articles or books, and speak in your area of expertise. Each time you solve a problem for a client, produce an outline and fill it in from start to finish. Voila, you have an article or a speech. Multiple articles can comprise a book.

12. Value for free = Service for fee:

MARKETING/LEADS

Leads, Leads, Leads

Follow up, or you waste them.



by Linda Richardson

IN A CHALLENGING ECONOMY, clients' decision processes often become protracted.

You'd think that salespeople would jump on every possible lead, early and often.

Yet even today, many leads are too easily discounted. For example, some salespeople mistakenly discount a lead because the level of the contact isn't high enough. Yet many sales opportunities begin at the operational level.

As much as 80 percent of leads that are deemed quality leads are not followed up on in a timely or consistent way—hence, they are wasted.

To maximize your chances of meeting your numbers, don't squander a lead—but don't waste time either.

1. Go the client's website. Do some quick research to determine the client's qualifications, needs, and culture.

2. Follow up the day you get the lead. You'll impress the client, and you are more likely to get through and sell. Every day you wait to respond, you diminish your chances for success. Early on, the lead is better!

3. Be ready with a short, compelling message, starting with thank-

Provide an educational session to prospects at no charge, but structure the delivery so that they want more. After delivering the promised information, make reference to additional, high value information your clients receive.

13. Don't attend conventions without clear intentions. Get an attendee list in advance, identify and research your targets, establish contact and engage them. Make your attendance result in new business by preparing in advance.

14. Break it down to build it up. Identify key result areas—prospecting, delivery, marketing, speaking, product development. For each, set measurable goals quarterly. Break these down into component parts, and calendar them.

Don't allow negativity to block your success. Take constructive action. **SSE**

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ACTION: Apply these tips to thrive in sales.

ing the client for contacting your organization (or find something else to thank them for).

- If you get voice mail, ask clients to provide you with times when you can reach them and also let them know your schedule so you can be ready. Remember it is your job to follow up. And when you call, be prepared to ask a few questions if you do connect.

- Follow up vigorously. Call back daily on leads. Polite persistence pays off.

- If you have the prospect's e-mail address, send a short e-mail: "Bill, thank you for contacting us about (fill in the blank). We (talk about your capability). I look forward to learning more about your objectives and how we may (talk about your benefits). Please let me know any times that may be convenient for me to contact you." Make

it easy for your clients to respond. Do this in conjunction with a phone call.

- Even when you are fairly sure the client won't qualify, call back or send an e-mail. You may be surprised. It is courteous. And it may become an opportunity within the year.

- Check out which prospects have visited your website and be proactive in turning them into leads.

Leads are the precious metals of sales. Maximizing leads takes a sense of urgency. And a sense of urgency is one of the sure signs of a sales star. **SSE**

Linda Richardson is CEO of Richardson, a leading global sales training company. Visit www.richardson.com or call 215-940-9255.

ACTION: Make best use of your leads.

Are You Killing Creativity?

Cultivate innovation for explosive growth.



by Scott Jeffrey

IN TODAY'S HYPER-CONNECTED, fast-moving marketplace, businesses are racing to grow big—and fast. Wall Street and private investors alike demand double-digit growth year after year.

Many business owners and executives fail to realize growth results because they haven't set the right conditions. Profitability and customer loyalty are consequences of a commitment to evolve, innovate and exceed their customers' expectations.

Ironically, focusing obsessively on growth stifles innovation, the life-blood of growth. Just ask Apple, Google, Netflix or any company that thrives in a competitive landscape. Or talk to Microsoft, Yahoo, and Blockbuster to learn how competitors have trampled their market share, making them irrelevant to former customers.

Consider Proctor & Gamble: In 2000, the company issued profit warnings, sending the stock tumbling to half its value. A.G. Lafley arrives as the new CEO and shifts the focus to customer-centered innovations. Profits tripled.

Conducting "business as usual" is a surefire way to become obsolete. Innovation and growth require unbridled creativity to innovate, solve problems and create a fabulous customer experience, which in turn requires the proper inner and outer conditions to manifest. Learn to eliminate the barriers to rapid creative innovation.

Learn and Apply Five Lessons

Here are five lessons you can apply to unleash creativity and innovation.

1. Create an atmosphere where people are inspired to succeed rather than afraid to fail. Failure is a necessary aspect of invention (just ask Thomas Edison), but the fear of failure blocks the creative impulse. If employees are afraid of making mistakes, you can be sure that creativity will be stifled.

In a fearful state, the brain toggles to the more primitive lizard brain (responsible for basic life functions like digestion, respiration and reproduction) for survival, rendering access to the more evolved learning brain (responsible for

memory, problem-solving, communication and creativity) impossible.

Abraham Maslow observed that creativity arises as a consequence of a positive mental state. When employees are happy and secure, you're more likely to see creative contribution. Amy Edmondson, Novartis professor of leadership at Harvard Business School, finds that the optimal learning environment combines a high degree of psychological safety with accountability for meeting demanding goals. When people feel safe, they're more likely to collaborate and learn on the job.

Creative cultures cultivate environments that embrace failure as the precursor to success. *Fail, but fail quickly and move on.* Southwest Airlines' secret to 40 years of profitability is memorialized by their motto, "Risk More, Fail Faster." Failure is the gateway to a breakthrough idea.

2: Track performance by innovative contribution rather than time on the clock. Why should we track how many hours employees spend at their desks, when what we're really interested in is their success at innovating, making customers happy and growing the business? In a global marketplace, the concept of nine-to-five is almost meaningless. We are interested in outcomes, not time clocks—in results, not efficiency. One can be efficiently busy yet ineffective at achieving results.

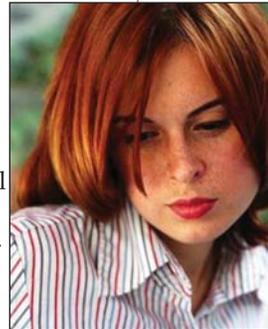
Each person needs different conditions for creating. Some people prefer working from home; others working at night. Realizing that some guidelines are needed, how flexible will you be in the pursuit of a more profitable business? Financial service provider *The Motley Fools* offers unlimited vacation time as long as employees do an amazing job and meet deadlines.

3. Focus on allowing instead of doing. Our culture is busy. In fact, we often mistake *busyness* with *business*. With e-mails, text messages, phone calls and meetings, there's no shortage of busyness, always things to *do*. Little of our daily communication supports the creative process, which favors *allowing* over *doing*. You've

likely had a great idea pop into mind as you've walked through the woods, showered, or cruised the highway.

Give your people space to wander, play and create—even on non-work-related activities. Google engineers, for example, spend 20 percent of their time working on whatever they want. Google trusts their talented employees to build useful and innovative things—some of which will become new projects in their Google Labs.

4. Create a culture that lifts your employees' spirits rather than drains their energy. Conditions should support positive, creative thinking. Most office space feels dead and lifeless. If you don't create a place where people enjoy working, how can you expect them to perform at their best? eBay's headquarters has a dedicated meditation room. Google offers healthy, organic cuisine prepared by a gourmet chef. Fluorescent lighting collapses the



body's acupuncture meridians and hampers the brain's ability to think clearly.

Using full-spectrum, natural bulbs can actually affect the bottom line. Add plants to infuse more life. Be aware of wall colors, mounted pictures, paintings, and use of floor space. These factors affect the environment's appeal.

5. Foster creative collaboration rather than just getting it done. Innovative companies know that optimal business growth is connected to harmonious teams. If you focus on policies, mechanics or systems of business instead of your people and customers you serve, you're bypassing the heart and soul of your business. Without positive emotion and heartfelt connection, the power of creativity is stifled.

Creative businesses support group collaboration and the free exchange of ideas. Consider creating an "idea room" with whiteboards, comfortable chairs, fun music, healthy snacks, creative décor, even juggling balls. Team members use the brain room to hold brainstorming sessions or problem-solving collaborations. Providing a safe forum for employees to share "crazy ideas" in an open and supportive environment paves the way to many innovations.

Have fun, be creative, innovate, and watch your business grow! **SSE**

Scott Jeffrey is strategic coach and author of Creativity Revealed and managing partner at Nonbox Consulting. Visit www.scottjeffrey.com or scott@scottjeffrey.com.

ACTION: Innovate for growth.

Unpaid Consulting

It's part and parcel of sales.



by Landy Chase

OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS, I've heard many bad ideas when it comes to effective selling. Here is the worst one: "Don't be an unpaid consultant."

I was reminded of this when I was asked to participate in a phone conference involving one of my clients. The company had many of their executives together for a meeting, and they asked me if I would join their group for a teleconference during my lunch hour.

Here's the catch: there was no offer of payment for my time; I was being asked to be the unpaid consultant. As always, I welcomed the opportunity.

I disagree with the idea that you should avoid being an unpaid consultant when you are in sales. In fact, you should do the opposite—strive, daily, to be the unpaid consultant. Why?

Customers form their strongest relationships with people who give the most value. Today, what you sell—be it a product or service—is, in itself, the least valuable thing that you offer. In fact, it is viewed by most buyers as a commodity. Whether you are a car salesman, financial advisor, copier rep, lawyer, or plumber, customers can get what you sell from dozens of other people who offer the same thing. In a me-too world, good advice—ideas that help customers to make better decisions—trumps the value of your "wares."

The highest compliment that a customer can pay you is to confer upon you the title of *Unpaid Consultant*—to want your opinion when they are not buying and to value your knowledge and your expertise.

For example, if you sell automobiles, to get your opinion on which of a competitor's two models is a better choice for a child in college. If you sell advertising, which medium you would recommend as a better investment for reaching a target audience. If you sell printing, your thoughts on whether a new ink is appropriate for a packaging project.

People don't ask for input from those whose opinion they don't value. When customers ask for your advice, they view you as an expert. Give the request your best effort, every time. You will be rewarded many times over.

Among my vendor relationships are vendors whose advice I rely on. One is my CPA. I've used her for 10 years, although she lives 500 miles away.

Why am I loyal to her? I value is her mind—her ability to analyze my business and make recommendations that help me manage it. To me, this is irreplaceable. Yes, much of her time with me is billed, but often her advice is unbilled. She is a very good salesperson and has excellent interpersonal skills. She is a good listener, and even puts up with my whining during tax season. She knows the value of being the unpaid consultant.

Two years ago, she informed all of her clients, including me, that she needed to trim her client list. I called begged her to keep me, reminding her that I have a simple business, am easy to work with, and pay on time.

She assured me that I had nothing to worry about. Relieved, I hung up. Then I thought, "Wow. I am the customer, and I am begging this vendor: please, continue to take my money!"

Does this describe the relationship that you have with your customers? How valuable are you to them? Do they depend on you for giving them direction, or are you an order-taker?

Every time that a salesperson asks me, "What would you like to do?", I want to say, "Why are you asking me? I thought that you were the expert."

Don't ask me for my opinion; I'm paying you for yours. Be confident and assertive. Tell me what I should do—the unpaid consultant. **SSE**

Landy Chase speaks on professional selling and sales management skills. Visit www.landychase.com or call 1-800-370-8026.

ACTION: Be an unpaid consultant.

SERVICE/CARE

Care Equals Cash!

Customers want to know.



by George Hedley

WHILE SENDING GREETING cards and gifts to customers is a nice gesture, is it worth the effort? Even when such gifts are unique, your customers may not remember who gave them the gift!

The main reason customers stop doing business with you is an attitude of indifference. They just want to know you care!

What do you do for your customers to show you care and appreciate their business? How do you stay in touch and help them? How do you set yourself apart? Impersonal cards or gifts are a waste of time and money—if that is all you do to build loyal customer relationships.

Customers want to know you care about them—their business, their challenges, and them as individuals. Building trusted relationships takes time and constant contact. The best way to develop loyal customer relationships is "face-to-face" time and relationship-building sessions.

Take care of the Top 24. Most businesses only have about 24 loyal clients or customers who make up most of their profitable sales. Since the list is small, it doesn't take much to keep in touch and build lasting relationships with top customers regularly.

Make a chart of your top 24 cus-

tomers. Keep track of your meetings, contacts, and relationship-building sessions with them. Have two customer care meetings weekly. Insure you see each of your "Top 24" at least every three months. These settings must be face-to-face. Get to know each other, and discuss what matters to your customers: their likes, dislikes, family, friends, and future. Find out how you can do more, provide better service, or improve quality for them. Build trust and confidence. Give them advice on how to grow their business. Show them you care about their success.

Send one-a-day vitamins.

Thank clients regularly. Send out hand-written thank-you notes or cards. Tell them you appreciate their business. Send out small gifts of appreciation as well. It only takes a minute. These notes, cards, and gifts work like "one-a-day" vitamins, keeping your bottom line healthy.

Make it personal. When you see a good article on an area your customers are working on, send them a copy to show you care about their future. If you know they like golf, get them a picture book on the world's best golf courses. Make it personal.

Meaningful time and constant contact with customers means big money. Invest in your future by investing time in your customers. Customer care in a consistent special way will return big cash and create loyal customers. **SSE**

George Hedley is author of Get Your Business To Work! and Profit 101. Visit www.hardhatpresentations.com, email: gh@hardhatpresentations.com.

ACTION: Show your customers that you care.



Business Success

Learn three lessons from kids.



by Brian Sullivan

ON A FLIGHT TO MEXICO, MY two-year-old daughter Maggie extended her arms toward an older woman sitting in the window seat and said, “My see.”

The adult translation of those words is, “Excuse me ma’am, your window seat is better than my middle seat. I would really love to climb over this armrest, jump on your lap and hang out with you so I can look out that window. Are you okay with that?”

Well-versed in the language of baby babble, this woman knew exactly what Maggie was saying. She pulled up the armrest and held out her arms. Without hesitation, Maggie plopped onto her lap and began cloud gazing.

My first reaction was one of hesitation. After all, I was a product of the “don’t talk to strangers” era, and not only was Maggie talking (I think), she was bouncing on the knee of a complete stranger. My second reaction was as an adult; thinking there was no way that woman could want my drooling two-year-old climbing all over her.

After visiting, Maggie waved bye-bye to the woman and scampered back to her Barney video. And throughout the week Maggie sat in several more laps, high-fived countless strangers and waved kisses to a dozen people she had met. As I watched, I began thinking at what point and at what age will Maggie become weary of new faces, put her guard up and stop trusting people she doesn’t know? At what point will strangers stop smiling at, waving at, and openly trusting her?

Then I thought, what a shame. Why does it have to end? Maybe it doesn’t. While I don’t expect strangers to randomly pinch our cheeks and blow us kisses walking down the street, maybe there is something we can do that will make people want to open up to us more. Because if they open up to us more, we can then learn more, influence more and serve more. So how do we do gain access to the hearts and minds of as many people as possible?

Lesson 1: Trust others as you did when you didn’t know any better! Trust others, and they will trust you. It’s a nice little game of give and take.

If your defenses are always up and are skeptical of other’s intentions, other’s defenses will be up, and they will be skeptical of your intentions. So this week, let’s think of one person who you are reluctant to trust and trust them. Make the first move. Might you get burned? Yep! But when you open your doors, more good than bad will enter. And surrounded by more good than ever, you can be taken back to a time when, like Maggie, people felt even more compelled to smile at you, laugh with you and let you know that their day is better because you helped them “look out the window and into the clouds” for just a bit.

Lesson 2: Put yourself “out there” by being fearless. Sure, most kids are afraid of things like green beans and



cough syrup, but like Maggie, most have no problem “cold calling” people they don’t know. Why? Because they don’t yet have a fear of rejection. Even without a psychology degree, most people can tell you the most successful salespeople, entrepreneurs and business leaders attack opportunities that average performers deem outlandish.

This week, think of three business opportunities or potential clients who others think you have no chance of getting. Identify the highest person in the decision-making chain and make the call, pay the visit, send the creative e-mail, or deliver the singing telegram. Regardless of how you do it, put yourself out there. And take comfort in knowing the top is not crowded. Most of your competition is too scared to take the risk that you are about to take.

Another way to put yourself out there is to identify one smart person whom you want to learn from—not your buddy in the office, your manager or current mentor. Think about somebody big such as the author of

your favorite book or a magazine writer you love, the host of that business radio show you enjoy, the speaker at that last seminar . . . whomever! Why not? Most people, regardless of their VIP status, are willing to help anybody gutsy enough to ask.

Cameron Johnson, a well-known author at age 23, has sold more than a dozen Internet businesses, and is now a contestant on Oprah’s Big Give. He talked about when he was an eight-year-old kid, sending a letter to Donald Trump, Plaza Hotel, New York City. It was addressed just like that—no street number, street name, or zip code! He didn’t tell his parents he was sending it, but in the letter he asked Mr. Trump if, when he came to New York, Donald would give him a tour of the room where Macaulay Culkin stayed in the movie “Home Alone—Lost in New York.” When his family arrived at The Plaza for their vacation, the hotel manager’s first words were, “You must be Cameron!” Not long after, Cameron and family got a five-star tour of Cameron’s favorite room by none other than Donald Trump. So what’s the point? Because Cameron was eight-years-old and didn’t know any better, he put himself out there and his high-profile prospect, Donald Trump, responded by giving him access.

Lesson 3: Give access to expect access. Kids will not only talk to anybody, but they will let just about anybody talk to them. How about you? Will you give access to just about anybody? Let’s face it, we are all crazy busy and don’t have a ton of minutes to burn every day. But if you expect people to call you back (access), you better be somebody who calls others back. If you expect that high level decision-maker to let you in, you better let that salesperson calling on you “in.” If you expect advice from that VIP, you better be willing to give advice to that rookie. Those who get to the top in business and in life are those who are the most selfless. And because it is so natural for the top performer to give help and access to others, it is easy for them to ask for it from others.

Turn back the clock by trusting more, fearing less, and by opening up to those who need your help. By acting in this childish manner, you will find yourself with a lot more customers, contacts, mentors and friends. **SSE**

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ACTION: Apply these lessons to sell more.

Create a Profit Powerhouse

Align sales with marketing.



by Linda Bishop

UNDERSTANDING HOW YOUR customers decide to buy and what they need to know to make the decision helps you spend marketing dollars wisely and increases the odds of closing sales. The goal of *marketing* is to match people with products, to acquire customers and keep them. The goal of *sales* is to persuade someone to buy today.

Marketing activities are one-way conversations with prospects and customers. Standard offers are crafted to appeal to profitable segments of the marketplace and brand building enhances competitive advantage.

Selling makes use of two-way conversations, often taking place in real time. Salespeople speak to prospects, answer questions, and address concerns. They provide information and adjust messages in the moment so customers are persuaded to buy.

When marketing aligns with sales, it's a match made in money-making heaven where dollars bring happy returns, and your company is in synch with the buying process. Deliver the right message to the right audience at the right time, and sales increase.

To create alignment, start with the buying process, as it offers a framework to provide buyers with the information they need in order to say, "Sold!"

Step 1: Awareness. Before buyers can fall in love with your product or service, they must know it exists. Companies create awareness by advertising, sending out direct mail and email blasts, connecting through social media, and by hiring salespeople to cold call. Mix and match any or all of these awareness-builders to get the word out to potential customers. Align marketing with sales by informing the sales force who the advertising is targeting? Why will the message appeal to prospects? When you send direct mail or email blasts, have the sales team make follow-up calls. Have sales and marketing meet regularly to discuss results and better ways to create powerful messages to hit the target.

Step 2: Information. Now potential buyers ask, "Do I really need this?" and "What do I know about the com-

pany?" Marketing creates materials to support sales efforts and offer evidence of benefits. The sales force has a finger on the customer's pulse so eliciting their input helps make marketing messages and materials relevant.

Step 3: Evaluation. Now the buyer gets serious. They consider the risks and rewards of doing business with you. They compare you to the competition. Personal selling is powerful because face-to-face dialogue uncovers objections and answers them. Marketing helps sales close deals by arming the sales team with testimonials, case studies and guarantees. At this stage, buyers want details because they're close to making a decision.

Step 4: Purchase. The buyer buys because you provide them with the right information in the right way at the right time. At this point, the sales-

person pens a personal thank-you, or marketing mails a standard welcome kit. The goal is to insure the purchaser feels happy about their decision.

Step 5: Re-purchase evaluation. The customer bought from you once. Will they buy again? Yes, if the product performs as promised, service is good, and they feel good about the experience. It's time to guard against complacency and continue to provide value. Make customers glad they chose you, and you'll reap the benefits of word-of-mouth advertising and future sales.

Align sales with marketing to stop wasting money, spend smarter, and work more as a team—and then watch the top line grow. **SSE**

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ACTION: Boost your profits.

SALES/BELIEFS

Boost Sales Results

Do your beliefs block success?



by Wendy Weiss

WHAT SEPARATES PEOPLE who succeed from those who struggle? Why is one person able to start a business or begin a new job in sales and succeed, while others with similar qualifications and abilities fail?

What makes the difference are thoughts and beliefs: *Beliefs → Actions → Results*.

Whatever you believe affects your actions. If you believe that a certain action is negative, you will not want to take that action. If you believe an action to be positive, you will find that it will be far easier to move forward with that action.

Taking action (or not), gives you results of one sort or another. If you evaluate your results and don't like what you find, or if you want different results or better results, you need to change your beliefs—it circles right back around to what you believe.

One participant in my sales program said that she struggled to know what to say to prospects. I asked her to tell me about her company. She said that her company has achieved some amazing results for its customers. I suggested to her that she simply say what she had told me. Her response: "If I do that, I feel like I'm bragging."



I asked, "Are all of these results true?" She assured me they were. "In that case," I said, "you're not bragging, you're simply telling the truth."

Just because you feel something, does not make it so. In this case, this participant felt as though she was "bragging." These were her honest feelings, and she was feeling them. However, those feelings did not necessarily reflect any objective reality. And in this case, those feelings were keeping her from prospecting successfully.

From a subscriber to my e-newsletter, *Opening Doors & Closing Sales*, I received this question: "Is there a script

I can customize to reach the hearts of my prospects without giving them the feeling I want to sell them something?"

This subscriber obviously feels that selling is a negative activity. Selling is actually neutral; it is the ethics of the sales person that makes the activity positive or negative.

I'm willing to bet that because of the way this subscriber feels about selling, her beliefs about selling as a negative activity have kept her from taking action, which has kept her from getting the results that she wants.

So what do you believe? And are your beliefs standing in your way? If so, it's time to change some of those beliefs. Remember: At one point in history everyone believed the world was flat. Most of us no longer believe that. It is possible to change. **SSE**

Wendy Weiss, *The Queen of Cold Calling*, is author of *Getting in the Door*. Download her free article at www.wendyweiss.com or email wendy@wendyweiss.com.

ACTION: Align beliefs with actions to get results.

Boost Trust Factor

This enhances the bottom line.



by Daniel Burrus

WITH BILLIONS OF DOLLARS in taxpayer bailout money, how much do you trust bank leaders who, after record losses, gave themselves unprecedented raises? How much do you trust the leaders of Wall Street? How much do you trust our government's ability to manage the money they've given to banks or the auto industry? How much do you trust leaders to do the "right thing" with the bailout money? This growing distrust hampers us as we try to reverse the recession.

The future is all about relationships, and all relationships need trust. In fact, trust is the glue that holds the knowledge economy together. The more trust you have with someone, the more powerful the relationship. The less trust, the weaker the relationship.

In business, trust is something you earn by displaying three universal values: honesty, integrity, and delivering on promises. In fact, no matter where you travel and regardless of religion or culture, those three values are the same.

Because people place such a high emphasis on trust, many companies cite "trust" in their list of values. And by nature, most people are indeed trusting of others. But because trust is assumed, many companies have a tendency to implement strategies that undermine trust. They fail to make trust a part of their strategy. Instead, trust stays in the back of their mind, and that's when problems begin.

For example, call your Telephone Company or Internet Service Provider today and tell them you're going to cancel your service and go with a different provider. To keep you as a customer, they'll likely offer you a lower rate. Does that make you trust them more? No. In fact, you may feel that you should have received the lower price all along. Such policies train customers to distrust the company.

Trust mishaps also happen with employees. Once a major company laid-off a few thousand employees. Rather than meeting with people individually, laying them off with dignity and providing support services, the company had their security guards tell those

being laid-off the bad news, give them their paperwork, watch them clean out their desk, and then escort them out the door. The remaining employees learned an important lesson that day: Never trust upper management.

Despite their actions, companies that violate trust are not evil. Rather, they're simply not thinking about trust when they lay out a course of action or outline policies.

To foster trust, use four strategies.

1. Never assume trust. When you're bringing about any change, create a "trust meter." On the far left is *no trust*, and on the far right is *full trust*.

Before you implement any change, ask yourself, "Between us (the company) and the people who will be impacted by this decision or policy, where is trust currently?" Mark it somewhere on your trust meter. Then ask, "If we implement this change in this way, what will happen to trust?" Mark whether you think

trust will go down, stay the same, or increase. If trust will go down, *don't implement the change that way*. Change how you implement the decision or policy so trust stays high. Reward anyone who comes up with a way to boost trust when implementing the change, as you want that behavior repeated. When you raise the bar on trust, your organization will thrive.

2. Offer more value to reward loyalty. As you decide what policies and changes your company will implement, think in terms of *adding value* rather than *giving something for nothing*. For example, one newspaper publisher sent a \$190 yearly renewal notice to customers. Those customers who didn't renew by the deadline received a phone call about the renewal. The newspaper employee offered the customer a deeply discounted renewal rate of \$90. This is a something-for-nothing mentality, because now the customer sees less value in the product (and feels ripped off for paying the higher renewal price in the past). A better strategy would be to offer the customer three months of newspaper delivery at no extra charge. Instead of

getting 12 months of newspaper delivery for a certain price, the customer gets 15 months of service for that same price. When you think in terms of *rewarding loyalty with more value rather than a lower price*, people feel that the company is giving them a genuine "thank you." They feel appreciated (something everyone wants to feel) and will want to keep doing business with you. Pinpoint what customers will perceive as added value and make that a part of your policy change.

3. Think in terms of the other person's perspective. No matter how hard you try, mistakes can happen and trust decrease. Rather than accept low trust, raise the bar on trust with those who feel less of it. For example, suppose you have a disagreement with one of your distributors. You both think the other is wrong. You need to say: "We've had a long and trusting relationship, and we don't want to lose that. What can

we do to make you happy?"

The answer you'll hear will likely be fair, since the conversation has shifted from a confrontational to a relational one. Everyone is a winner.

4. Survey customers and employees about trust.

Have employees, partners, and customers rate you on trust. You might have them

fill out the trust meter for you. With this feedback, you know where you stand and can make adjustments. Too often, trust is undermined, and the company and its leaders are the last to know. If you are the first to know, you can make corrections before it is too late. This also shows everyone that relationships and mutual trust are not just words, they are imperatives.

Trust Provides a Big Advantage

Customer service and support are often reduced in a slumping economy. People are laid-off with no warning or support. Face-to-face customer meetings are canceled. But when things are bad, relationships become more important! Doing things better stands out more. Becoming a trusted advisor versus a sales person stands out. Going the extra mile is more unique.

When you increase trust, your relationships deepen, enabling you to bring about change faster and more effectively, and to improve your business. **SSE**

Daniel Burrus is CEO of Burrus Research and author of *Technotrends* and other books. Visit: www.burrus.com.

ACTION: Boost trust to gain advantages.

Contagious Service

It starts with your people.



by Monica Wofford

ADDRESSING AN ATTITUDE is difficult. When you say “We need to talk about your attitude,” your employee thinks “I don’t have an attitude. Let’s talk about *your* attitude.”

If your office needs an attitude adjustment, address behaviors that stem from the attitude. Even better, address the performance that comes from the behavior that comes from the attitude.

It’s like this: A bad attitude, even if only the kind caused by economic pressure, creates less patient behavior, perhaps less tolerance with customers. This may result in higher customer returns or more complaints. However, if you address what you believe is the root of the problem, the attitude, you are then faced with these issues:

- Such criticism is taken personally.
- A defensive reaction will obstruct your ability to address the actual issue.
- If you are subtle, to avoid hurt feelings, he or she might not get it.
- If you’re too direct, you might hurt feelings and sabotage productivity.

Contagious Leaders learn to avoid these situations either through training or trial and error, but we still manage to commit a knee-jerk reaction sometimes and forget the basic rules of performance management and human nature. Address the performance of that employee who seems to have an attitude challenge. In fact:

1. Take note of the measurable numbers and data that reflect performance is not where it needs to be.
2. Institute a professional conduct policy if performance isn’t measurable.
3. Share with the employee what you like best about what she does and what you’d like to see done differently.
4. Give her a timeframe by which to correct this performance.
5. If applicable, share a consequence for no improvement.

If the consequence is meaningful enough for the employee, she’ll do what is necessary to make the adjustment in performance. This will likely entail a change in behavior and attitude.

As leaders, we can’t change the attitude of another person—much like a speaker cannot motivate an audience. However, we can provide an environ-

ment for change and rewards and consequences to incent people to change.

Take Time for Renewal

Are your customers suffering from your employees? When employees are stressed, it rubs off on customers!

To keep your customers from suffering through what employees bring to the office or must deal with there, make time for the following:

- **Customer service skills refresher training.** Remind them of the basics. Yes Ma’am. No Sir. Please. Thank you. May I place you on hold? (and wait for the answer to that question!)
- **Energy boosts.** Maybe they need a motivational session or stress reliever so that they can get out of their own head and out of their own way.
- **Vent Sessions.** Emotions tend to follow us wherever we go. Give those

SALES/INFLUENCE

Influential Sales

Are you hungry for more?



by Sam Palazzolo

IN BUSINESS, NOTHING MATTERS more than selling your products or services.

It doesn’t matter how educated your people are, how cool your Website is, or how great your products or services are if you can’t sell.

Here are five techniques you can implement today to get more sales tomorrow:

1. **Give it away!** Give away your experience. Your customers are concerned about where they are and going! And your products or services can perform better than others, right? Well, let your customers know—now! Offer your experience as the differentiator, and you’ll rise to the top. Your customers will love you more, and they’ll receive even more value from the product or service you provide.
2. **Get referrals.** Referred customers are 80 percent sold on you already. You just need to convert them the remaining 20 percent. However, most salespeople rarely ask their customers for referrals. Sure, it’s exciting to go after new clients, but it’s far too hard! Contact people you now do business with and up your level of service to them. Then ask them who might enjoy a similar level of service!
3. **Introduce yourself with influence.**



you lead a free pass to vent and let them go at it and get it off of their chest and get back to business with a clear head.

Ask Them What They Need. Do service employees get what they need? Too bad you can’t train your customers to give it to them, too. But you can be a catalyst for the transfer of positive contagious customer service. Remember to treat those employees at least as well as you treat your best customer.

When things get in the way of feeling positive or productive, you can feel stress and negativity—or look for ways you can better manage those tasks that fill up your time. And remember, today you have all the time you need to get the most important things done. **SSE**

Monica Wofford is a speaker, trainer, coach, and CEO of Contagious Companies, author of Contagious Leadership. Visit www.contagiouscompanies.com.

ACTION: Assess your contagious behavior.

You need to introduce yourself as an expert—in 10 seconds! How? Introduce yourself and say who referred you:

“Hello, Ms. Jones, this is Sam Palazzolo. Jane Doe recommended that I give you a call. Here’s why.” This is straight to the point. Your prospect will want to know why Jane suggested that you call. Don’t even say your company name or title—you can tell them later.

4. **Know thy stuff.** Next, talk about the good stuff—the merits of why this person would want to do business with you: “Our service drives 500 per-

cent improvement in productivity. You’ll decrease your turnover rate by 300 percent. One of our clients attained a 3X revenue improvement.” Rank order your merits—why the customer should do business with you versus your competition and know each one in order of importance.

5. **Perfect practice makes perfect.** Practice the merits of your argument! When you present them to a prospective client, start with “important” items and work toward “majorly important” ones. But before you communicate the most important merit that drives the most return on investment (ROI) for your prospect, tell them the biggest negative of doing business with your company. This will make you an instant authority, and you gain incredible trust and credibility!

By applying these five sales tips, you will achieve more sales! **SSE**

Sam Palazzolo is a speaker, coach, author of The Influential Leader, and CIO at Pathos Leadership Group. Email sp@pathosleadershipgroup.com.

ACTION: Gain influence to make more sales.

Do You Need Coaching?

Only if you need and seek better results.



by Brad Sugars

IN MY 15 YEARS OF BUSINESS coaching, I've noted that most managers and owners are knowledgeable, motivated, and seemingly hard-wired for success.

But knowledge can be a dangerous thing. The two words "I know" can be crippling for executives and owners, where leading companies fall out of their leadership positions at a rate four times greater than they did 30 years ago. What's happening to those companies? Are they being run today by people of lower intelligence? Doubtful.

I bet they're being run by executives who know a lot, yet fail to see how well they actually apply the knowledge they have to their company's situation.

Why the Rise in Coaching?

The rise of coaching as an alternative to consulting is based on factors that you should know in positioning your company for a profitable future.

First, the executives and owners realize the pace of business is outpacing their ability and capacity to keep up. In addition, the challenges they face are common—even if they think their particular company or situation is unique. These two issues provide an immense opportunity for coaching.

Most executives and owners need applied knowledge right away. They need information they can easily understand and immediately use in their companies to get a positive result. They don't have time to go back to school to get an advanced degree; but they need a depth of knowledge beyond what they find in a Google search. They also need the awareness that even if their company or situation seems unique, there is nothing new in terms of proven ways to develop, grow and profitably build an enterprise.

While a consultant will focus on a particular function or department to help provide that awareness, a coach will help the executive and owner see the company as a complete entity made up of component parts, and each part can be worked to create synergy that leverages productivity and results for the entire company.

Combine this with a target for

exponential results—because with incremental results, most clients deny the value of the coaching process—and you have a strong case for making coaching an integral and ongoing part of any team or business.

Another factor in the increased demand for coaching centers on the ability of a coach to hold an executive or owner accountable. The traits that make business people great leaders—motivation, drive, and quest for success—can also stymie the growth and development of teams and companies, since many leaders don't feel the need to answer to anyone. In large organizations, this "blind spot" can be held in check to a certain extent by a Board of Directors; since few small businesses have a Board, acknowledgement of the need for accountability can greatly influence decisions and actions in a positive way. Most consultants simply don't want to hold their clients accountable.

This lack of real interaction marks the difference between a coach and consultant. The coaching model that produces results for our clients focuses on the long-term, and you can only develop long-term results by engaging in interactive and professional one-on-one coaching and client relationships.

Many executives and owners avoid this arrangement, preferring instead to choose the quick-fix and remote functions of a consultant. The downside is that the quick fix is exactly that—focused on the short-term benefit of not engaging on a more personal and professional level. The drive for a quick fix exacerbates the problems faced by executives and owners who need coaching but who want to take the easy way out.

True growth, change, and progress only occur by confronting issues on a one-on-one level, setting long-term goals and being held accountable to achieving results. While most executives and owners "know" they need to do these functions, few do them well—or reach a point in their careers or their businesses where what they thought they "knew" doesn't match

the reality of a rapidly changing business and competitive environment.

So what happens when an executive or owner sees the value of coaching and wants to hire a Business Coach? As with most growth industries, many people have seen an opportunity and have jumped into the field with little or no experience in building business.

Ask Five Questions

What should you look for in a prospective coach to ensure you receive the tools and systems needed to build your business? **To make sure you get an excellent return on your coaching investment, ask a prospective coach five questions:**

1. How will you work with my company and team?
2. What is your background and how does it apply to my business?
3. Do you have or work from a proven system of business development?
4. What support do you have from your coaching company? How big is your network?
5. What is your company's track record of experience and proven results?

After your initial meeting, ask yourself these five questions:

1. Has the coach clarified the differences between coaching and consulting?
2. Does he ask good questions?
3. Will he hold you accountable?
4. Is he honest about how you would work together?
5. Does he put you and your company first, or only interested in selling coaching products and services?

How you answer those questions will determine the type of coach and coaching program in which you'll invest. Ideally, your decision to invest in business coaching will not be based on dollars, but on something bigger—like becoming a better leader for your team, business, and community.

The results will be up to you, but I believe that your investment in coaching will be one of the best, most effective and profitable you will ever make.

Business coaching borrows from sports, and I don't know of one champion athlete who hasn't benefited from great coaching, or a great coach. If athletes can learn something from a coach, you can learn something, too. **SSE**

Brad Sugars is CEO of ActionCOACH. Visit www.actioncoach.com.

ACTION: Get the coaching you need.



Acres of Diamonds

Align the person with the job.



by Ron Price

ONCE A CERTAIN MAN, UPON learning about diamonds, sold his successful farm and spent his fortune traveling in search of the gems. Years after he died, having never found the diamonds he sought, others discovered the largest diamond mine ever found—on the farm he sold to begin his quest.

Imagine that there was a special machine that could tell you exactly what each employee might become in the future. You could then create a custom development program that resulted in the most profitable and fulfilling use of every employee. Would you use such a machine, if it were available?

Leaders often discover an internal conflict between taking care of the concerns of the business and a longing to “do it right” and manage more strategically for long-term success. Beleaguered executives often confess that even if they did have a perfectly clear picture of the best way to develop and manage their people, current circumstances wouldn’t allow it.

Mediocre supervisors assume that everyone should be able to learn how to do a job with training and that the greatest employee growth is realized by focusing on areas of weakness.

Exceptional managers assume that everyone has unique talents and that people’s greatest potential lies in developing and leveraging their strengths rather than trying to fix weaknesses.

Leaders who seriously identify, develop, and deploy talent know that getting the right people doing the right things is the key differentiator. Thinking about how they manage people comes before thinking about how they will compete. For leaders, this is a difficult shift in mindset, as they’re measured by annual revenue, stock value, earnings, or credit rating—hard financial measures.

Understanding and deploying talent is more difficult. How can we balance the scales by creating compelling measurements for identifying, hiring, developing, and optimizing talent?

You can experience breakthroughs in performance by asking three questions:

What talent patterns is this job asking for to achieve superior performance?

There are specific activities, rewards, and evaluative judgment patterns that result in superior performance for each job. By defining these, you develop a clarity that leads to better performance, improved hiring process, customized training and development strategies, and better performance management.

What natural talent patterns does this person bring to the job and how should we leverage this talent? Every person brings a unique combination of behavioral tendencies, motivational biases, and judgment inclinations to their work. When these align with what the job requires, superior performance results. When there is misalignment, it doesn’t matter what education or experience people bring, they will always struggle to perform at a superi-

SALES/RELATIONSHIPS

Got Relationships?

Great, now work smart.



by Dave Kahle

I HAVE GREAT RELATIONSHIPS with my customers. That is one of the most debilitating myths around—one that cripples the performance of salespeople. And, yet, most salespeople believe it.

I often hear of sales executives hiring people from a competitor because “they have such great relationships with their customers that they’ll bring business with them.” And yet, it rarely happens that way. In fact, the “great relationships” line is often a smoke-screen to hide their lack of sales expertise. Also, salespeople who profess to have *great relationships* with customers often limit their sales calls to those with whom they have these relationships. So, the perceived relationship dictates their strategic decisions—they go where it is easiest, and spend time with those whom they perceive like them.

When they do that instead of going where it is smart, where there is greater potential, they allow their perception of the relationship to influence their strategic decisions. It ought to work the other way around. The potential of the customer should dictate where the salesperson builds relationships.

The *great relationships* myth produces two major obstacles to sales success: it covers up the salesperson’s lack of sales competencies, and it prevents

or level. This work of managing others is to understand and leverage strengths and to neutralize the weaknesses.

What is the most effective way to develop and focus each person’s talent based on the alignment between the job and the person? Diagnosis is 90 percent of the cure. If leaders can focus on what a job is asking for and how natural talent patterns relate to the job, then apply this knowledge to leveraging strengths and neutralizing weaknesses, they’ll see that their people represent underutilized resources. If you miss seeing the greatest treasure of all, you’ll forfeit your own acres of diamonds. **SSE**

Ron Price is CEO of Price Associates and author of *Finding Hidden Treasures*. Visit www.Price-Associates.com or call 866-442-0556.

ACTION: Develop the talent you have.

them from working smart.

The best salespeople make sound strategic decisions—prioritizing and targeting their accounts based on the potential, and then work at building positive business relationships with those people. They understand that just as important as the quality of the relationship is their ability to uncover the customer’s needs and wants at deeper levels, to position their products and services as perfect matches to the customer’s needs, to manage the project by gaining agreement every step of the way, and to leverage those positive transactions to identify further opportunities. In other words, they are good

at selling, whereas the relationship-reliant salespeople are only good at getting along with those people who get along with them.

The best salespeople also know that a positive business relationship provides access to key people, oils the gears of the transaction, and makes every step in the sales process smoother. But rarely do customers buy solely because of the relationship. The product has to be adequate, the service reliable, the pricing acceptable. The company has to keep its promises; there must be an infrastructure that supports sales presentations and promises. These issues are more important to customers than the relationship with the salesperson. So, cultivate great relationships with your customers along with your sales competencies and keep focused on high-potential customers. **SSE**

Dave Kahle is a consultant, trainer, and author of over 500 articles, a monthly e-zine, and six books. Visit www.davekahle.com contact: cheryl@davekahle.com.

ACTION: Get results through your relationships.

Grow Your Business

Choose innovation over complexity.



by John Mariotti

INNOVATE OR DIE IS A COMMON phrase to describe the urgency of innovation to drive growth. But many managers say, “We have no time or resources left for true innovation. We’re buried just supporting operations and solving problems.” All agree that innovation is the path to future success, but only a few companies, like Apple and P&G, devote enough time and resources to find breakthroughs. Why is this the case?

Complexity! Companies are reeling from self-induced complexity. In their frustrating search for high growth in low-growth markets, they substitute proliferation for innovation. They proliferate products, customers, and markets—but innovate in virtually nothing. The result is a tidal wave of extra work that leads to huge, hidden costs. Complexity costs hide in places that accounting systems use as “catchall accounts” where no cause is easily determined.

Are you drowning in complexity?

Does it seem “the faster you go, the behinder you get?” Is overhead up, and are people straining to keep their heads above the piles of work? If so, it’s time to run down the causes of these problems and find some solutions.

Most complexity is due to undisciplined expansion in many areas. Since there are few metrics to track complexity and its adverse impact, it continues to fly below the radar, costing millions and in some cases, billions. Worse, it keeps people from working on important, highest-potential opportunities.

The good news: There are solutions, and there are tools and techniques that help in new and better ways. Once complexity has been exposed and managed—either driven out, or put to good use—there will be more resources, more time and more money to devote to innovation. The path to truly profitable growth is through innovation in products, processes, methods, and strategies. So, let’s talk solutions.

Solution 1: Conquer complexity—sort and simplify to focus on the future. There are two approaches to dealing with complexity. Some use complexity to great advantage, streamlining processes and using a high-variety, high-

value strategy. Others must get rid of it to free time and resources for better use. The key for both is “sort and simplify,” then “focus on the future.” Sort products and customers’ annual sales and profits in descending value order and calculate the cumulative percentage contributed. The top of the list—20 to 25 percent of the items or customers—generates most of the sales and profits. The bottom 20 to 25 percent of the list is populated with mostly “losers” that generate little in sales or profits. Get rid of them, but not indiscriminately. That’s key to developing a sixth sense.

Solution 2: Use a sixth sense to engage customers and see the way. You know that most of those bottom dwellers are losers that need to be dumped. However, a few of them are



high potential future “stars” or important niche fillers in an overall product line or market segment. A new, improved approach is needed. Just as we use our five senses to evaluate our surroundings, it’s necessary to develop a “sixth sense” to use in this case. Our senses help us make decisions based on our environment. Using this sixth-sense process will help identify what is important to prospects and customers.

The problem: This is easy to say, hard to do. Customers’ decisions are based on complex considerations that even they usually don’t understand. You may deal with this by trying a little (or a lot) of everything, and the result is that a few tries hit the target. Most miss and lead to more complexity.

This sixth-sense process is critical to sorting the few winners from the many losers at the bottom of the list. It also helps reinforce why many of the big winners are so successful, adding insights that will create more winners.

The key is to make the use of this process routine; engage customers and

translate their desires, wishes and preferences into the best products and services to offer. Sort and simplify first, and then engage customers next. Clean out the bottom of the list wisely, and do it several times each year. Suddenly, instead of creating complexity and waste, you’re eliminating it by carefully targeted solutions. What’s next? Now it’s time to solve the stickier problems.

Solutions 3: Optimization solves complex problems. Sometimes the solutions must address more complex situations. Typically, when there are many available options (accessories on a car), the question becomes how to plan for them. Accommodating all variations is wasteful since few cases result in every available option being selected. Accommodating each uniquely is also wasteful; it leads to enormous variety and no volume-cost advantage. Whereas many cases of complexity yield to the “sort and simplify” or sixth-sense approaches, these situations require a different solution. The key here is optimization.

Optimization is something we do every day, such as deciding which route to take to work, based on time, traffic, etc. Which phone features to buy is another example. We estimate our usage of the features and “optimize” by purchasing a plan that meets most of our needs. To handle a large number of variables (as in the auto example), computer algorithms analyze the choices. Fortunately, such solutions exist. Rather than guess, or err to either extreme, it’s better to use proven methods to reduce unnecessary complexity, and make the optimum choice.

RESULT: Innovation for Growth

Complexity creates obstacles and wastes so many resources that none are left for innovation. If the nature of complexity is understood, decisions can be made on whether to create a high-variety, high-value strategy (“use it”) or one that drives out wasteful complexity, simplifying work and reducing waste (“lose it”).

Fortunately, after sorting and simplifying, new solutions help you understand the customers’ motivations, and optimize their choices. Now that you see the path, the decision is easy. It’s time to focus on the future, through innovation for profitable growth. Business is a game where the score is kept in money, and the winners get to play again. Choose innovation over complexity and make sure you’re one of the winners! **SSE**

John L. Mariotti is CEO of The Enterprise Group, and author of The Complexity Crisis. Visit www.mariotti.net.

ACTION: Innovate to grow your business.

Negotiate Salary

It could mean \$1 million.



by Wolf J. Rinke

WHY NEGOTIATE YOUR salary? You may consider it a distasteful activity.

Only 25 percent of men negotiate a job offer, salary, compensation and benefits—and only 15 percent renegotiate salary and compensation once hired. And women are even less likely to negotiate! In fact, many women don't negotiate at all because they experience greater anxiety about negotiations and are less likely to perceive situations as negotiable.

Most employers do not include all of the value they're willing to offer for a position in the first offer. Thus, many people experience an unnecessarily poor start to their earning potential. You might say: "If I do a good job, the compensation will follow." That would be nice; however, that is not the way the game is played. Those who negotiate their salary boost their pay an average of 7.4 percent compared to their initial offers. Over a career, that difference is *over one million dollars*.

If you learn to negotiate, you have a high probability of success. In one study, *72 percent of those who asked for a raise received one*. The ugly truth is this: *You don't get what you deserve—you get what you negotiate*. So, learn how you can increase your compensation, *now!*

Six Steps for Salary Negotiation

When negotiating, take six steps:

1. Commit to negotiating. Commit to yourself and to others that you will negotiate. No matter how uncomfortable or unpleasant you perceive it to be—just do it. As a first step, say to yourself, "I will have an active voice in my salary negotiation. I'll be assertive in regards to my compensation because I deliver a lot of value."

2. Recognize (and document) the value you deliver. To get paid what you are worth, convince yourself of the value that you'll create—and seek commensurate compensation. If you don't value yourself, no one else will either. Valuing what you do may not come naturally to you—women tend to place a lower value on their work.

3. Do your homework. Learn about the needs of your prospective employer and the salary that this position

pays based on experience, range of responsibilities, education, industry, geography and size of company. Consult on-line tools: www.salaryexpert.com, www.salary.com and www.payscale.com. Gather data from salary surveys. Talk to your peers to find out what they are earning. At least ask HR or the interviewer about the salary range for the position.

4. Strive to be respected, not liked. Negotiating is about getting what you deserve based on the value you deliver. No employer will think less of you if you negotiate; they will only think less of you if you do *not* negotiate. In fact, negotiating assertively will likely cause prospective employers to respect you more, since these skills enable you to succeed in your job.

5. Practice, Practice, Practice. Role-play with a coach, friend or col-

league. Ask your coach to start out nice and then get tough with you. Monitor your level of comfort with the process and how prepared you are responding to rejections. If you are uncomfortable, practice some more. Practice will enable you to get more of what you want.

6. Pretend you are negotiating for someone else. If all else fails, convince yourself that you are negotiating on behalf of your child or best friend. This works well for women because most tend to be very effective when they look out for someone else!

Apply these six steps to all aspects of your life, and you'll get more of the things you want from life and work. **SSE**

Wolf J. Rinke is a speaker, coach, consultant, and author of Make it a Winning Life. Call 410-531-9280, Email WolfRinke@aol.com or www.WolfRinke.com.

ACTION: Negotiate or renegotiate your salary.

SALES/APPROACHABILITY

Be Approachable

It will win you more business.



by Scott Ginsberg

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF you wore a nametag all the time? Would people be friendlier? Would people say hello? Or would they stare at or ridicule you?

The answer is, yes. All the above.

But if you want to be approachable, act as if you are wearing a name tag. Opportunities will come your way.

Approachability brings good fortune—it can produce huge improvements in cultures, customer relationships, and profitability.

When you wear a name tag, people know that you want them to engage you in conversation. It says, "Approach me, introduce yourself. It's okay." That's how you want to be seen. When people see you as approachable, opportunities open up. I've learned these 10 lessons:

1. Approachability wins business. Consumers require confidence before deciding to buy. If they can't come up to you, how will they get behind you?

2. Be the origin, not the echo. In business, the more normal you are, the less valuable you are. Be original.

3. Create points of dissonance (POD). Curiosity is a natural motivator of engagement. Before someone gets to the "Aha!" about what you do and sell, they must be captivated by the "Huh?"



4. Don't be stopped by not knowing how. Focus (first) on the what, and the how will appear. Remember: Ideas are free; execution is priceless.

5. Create fans, not customers. More fans = less selling. You need fans; and you need to give them megaphones. Build a following. Post on your blog daily; writing attracts wealth.

6. Make the mundane memorable. Nobody notices *normal* or buys *boring*. Those who get noticed get remembered—and win more business.

7. Networking works. If you want to be in the right place at the right time, you need to be in a lot of places. Find out where the rock created the ripple and throw more rocks.

8. People buy people first. Every interaction either adds to or subtracts from the positive perception of your brand. People don't buy from, trust or have loyalty to companies, but to people.

9. Shtick must be supported by substance. Shtick might get you in the door, but that doesn't guarantee you'll stay in the room. Customers want value, substance, and service.

10. Use the DIP—Disarm Immediate Preoccupation—to put yourself in the right state of mind. Take three steps: *Think!* Get ready to have fun. *Take a deep breath and relax.* In fact, take a few deep breaths. Then when you walk in the room, *smile*. This exercise lays the foundation for approachability. **SSE**

Scott Ginsberg is the author of Stick Your self Out There and Get Them to Come to You. Visit www.hello-mynametag.com.

ACTION: Act as if you are wearing a name tag.

8 Powerful Financials

These are not in your P&L reports.



by Howard Hyden

YOU CAN'T CUT YOUR WAY to prosperity. And yet many managers are obsessed with their profit-and-loss reports. They might be looking at the wrong numbers. Let's look at eight other numbers that might have a bigger impact on the profit and loss.

1. Increase in customer sales. What could happen if you were more passionate about increasing the *volume* of your customer sales as opposed to your *number* of sales. The president of one company sponsored educational sessions for his customers to bring them tools and knowledge that would help them grow their business. He thought that if he helped them grow their own business, his company would grow as a result.

2. Reduced total cost to the customer. A forklift distributor in Los Angeles, who sells and services forklifts to Lowe's, Home Depot, and Costco, has adopted this strategy. A customer's forklift operator had run his lift into a post, damaging the lift cage. The cage part of the lift was severely bent. The normal action by the technician responding to the call would have been to order a new cage. The cost of this part is substantial, not to mention the labor required to remove the damaged component and install a new one. The technician assigned to this customer, without consulting with his manager, went to an auto parts store and purchased a hydraulic jack for \$200 with his own money. The technician figured he could use the power jack to straighten the bent frame of the cage and return it to its original condition. His action was effective, and having saved his customer a large sum of money, will certainly have a huge impact to increase customer loyalty in the future. When these technicians show this kind of initiative, it is a fairly safe assumption that customers will spread the positive word of mouth which can contribute to an increase in sales for the company.

3. The cost of not training. This cost is greater than the cost of training. The huge investment has already been made. The cost of human capital,

which includes salary, benefits, payroll tax and social security etc., is usually the single biggest expense an organization has. Then they forget the missing piece, which is training. It's the small investment in training that leverages the big investment that has already been made. A formula to plan your investment in training is:

Dollars invested in training (12 months) divided by the gross salary = _____% (training as a percent of payroll). The average in the United States has been about 1 percent, which is fairly anemic. That number should be skyrocketing. Organizations that want to excel should target in the 5 percent range.

4. The cost of not weeding the garden. If you do not weed the garden of your poor performers, you will jeopardize losing your top performers and the performance of the team will go down. When you finally weed the garden, the employees will not only applaud your actions but also wonder what took you so long.

5. The cost of turnover. This cost is far greater than most managers realize. Here is a formula to calculate the cost of turnover. The company that has higher turnover relative to the competitors will probably have lower customer satisfaction. Employee turnover begets customer turnover. Turnover is very expensive!

6. Positive word of mouth (PWOM). PWOM is the best form of advertising. Yet few companies measure it. If Company A has 70 percent PWOM and 30 percent paid media and Company B has 30 percent PWOM and 70 percent paid media, Company B would need many more sales reps to get to the same revenue as Company A.

Referrals that come from PWOM will close at a much higher rate than leads from paid media. Also, the company may spend more money writing proposals and using support staff time to help reps as well as additional marketing materials and paid media.

Every organization wants referrals, yet few track it. Organizations that want to generate more referrals should

include a PWOM in their strategic planning discussions so that they can develop the actual strategies and tactics that will result in PWOM. They should set a goal as to what percentage of their business should come from PWOM. They can also target the number of new accounts they want from PWOM.

Setting goals and tracking PWOM should be included as a number to review in the monthly management meeting.

7. Lifetime value of a customer. Most organizations do not have an account number labeled "lifetime value of a customer." When you lose a customer you're not just losing sales volume for a

single order. You are losing the revenue from that account for a lifetime which can be 25 years or greater. However, most organizations fail to calculate the additional financial impact. If the customer is frustrated or irate, they will be spreading negative word of mouth (NWOM) The lack of having a PWOM strategy in place means that

you will also lose the revenue from the PWOM that could be generated had you turned this negative situation into a success for the customer.

8. Value of repeat customers. If Company A has 70 percent repeat customers and 30 percent new accounts, and Company B has 30 percent repeat customers and 70 percent new accounts, Company A will be more profitable. The cost of acquiring a new account is far greater than the cost of keeping current customers. Who is working harder on your accounts; your company to keep them, or the competitor to steal them?

It's easy to make a case that the above numbers will have a far greater impact on the sales and profit of a company than those numbers on the P&L. Why do so many companies focus on the standard financial statements and rarely look at the numbers above? Part of the reason is that General Accounting categorize expenses in revenue into the traditional account numbers that permeate every company's financial statements. It takes some out-of-the-box thinking to think of the non P&L financials. Yet focusing on these numbers might have a bigger impact on the bottom line. **SSE**

Howard Hyden is a keynote speaker and founder of The Center for Customer Focus. Visit www.howardhyden.com.

ACTION: Focus on these behaviors.



Selling Effectively

You can do it in tough times.



by Tom Sant

IT'S OFFICIAL. THE ECONOMY is in terrible shape. And nobody expects the situation to improve dramatically soon.

Meanwhile, you need to sell stuff. And the challenge you face is to figure out how to sell your stuff as effectively as possible, given the circumstances.

One way is to think about what your buyers are doing differently. Today, most customers would tell you that the risks are more important to manage than the gains. A compelling value proposition still has appeal, but nobody can afford to do anything risky because nobody can afford to lose a dime.

In a bad economy, the greatest risk is overspending. So buyers will push harder for discounts and concessions. Their goal is to get the same (or better) products and services, but to spend less to get them. That suggests that one key strategy is to focus on ways to reconfigure what you offer to strip away the extras. We need to whittle acquisition costs down to the bare minimum.

Another buying trend in a recession is that people want to insulate themselves from failure. As a result, besides spending less, they are more likely to follow rather than lead. Even the visionaries and early adopters are going to hang back in this economy. Your customers feel threatened, so they are far more likely to focus on addressing their vulnerabilities than they are capitalizing on opportunities. That means you are more likely to gain their attention and their business if you focus on closing gaps in performance and stopping up the leaks in their processes than you are by suggesting they introduce significant change into their operations.

The other challenge you face in a down economy is figuring out how to position what you have to offer as effectively as possible. According to Michael Porter, the guru of competitive strategy, the two of the most important principles for effective strategic positioning are, first, to adopt a unique position in your market or a segment of your market and, second, to make trade-offs in products and services to reduce cost.

Adopting a unique position. This is

the process of positioning your product or service in a way that minimizes competitive pressure by going after a segment of the market. It is more profitable to dominate a niche than it is to be a mainstream also-ran. This was the big secret at the heart of *Blue Ocean Strategy*. But it's easier said than done.

To figure out your unique position, ask yourself: *What do we do that no one else does? What do we do that everyone does, but in a different way? What category expertise do we have beyond any competitors? What strengths do we possess?*

What about unique resources, facilities, methods, or management practices?

Making trade-offs. If you have well-developed solutions—products that are mature or services that you have delivered many times with success—

MANAGEMENT/STRATEGY

Innovation Strategy

What business are we really in?



by Paul Sloane

THE CEO OF BLACK AND Decker said, "People don't go into a hardware store because they need one of our drills. They go because they need a hole in the wall." Wonderbra says, "We do not sell underwear or lingerie. We sell self-confidence for women." Harley Davidson does not sell motor-bikes. It sells freedom to middle-aged men.

What is it that your business *really* sells? What is the true value that customers get from your products or services? When you answer these questions, you start to conceive new ways to provide value. It is the starting point for real innovation.

Many leaders define what they do in terms of their products or services rather than by the benefit that clients derive. Here are some examples:

- Companies that thought they were in the horse-drawn carriage business but were really in transportation were wiped out by automobiles.
- Companies that thought they were in the ice supply business but were really in food and drink storage were eliminated by refrigerators.
- Companies that made slide rules failed to realize they were in the technical calculation business and were made obsolete by graphics calculators.
- Companies that thought they were

you may not want to change things. But in this economy, you may need to. When people are making price-driven decisions, they are less likely to buy a fully integrated solution. So, look at what you're offering and ask: *What can we unbundle? What can we carve out? What can we eliminate without compromising the ability of our solution to meet the customer's basic needs?* You can still offer the total solution, but now you offer the extra features or services as options that you provide for a slight additional fee.

In these difficult days, with creativity and flexibility, you can adapt your message and meet customers' needs. **SSE**

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ACTION: Adapt your message to meet needs.

in the CD business but were in music were replaced by digital downloads.

• Companies that thought they were in the typewriter business but were really in communications were put out of business by the word processor.

What business are you in? Why do your customers buy what you provide? To find out, you might ask your customers, ask people who consider your product but do not buy it, or observe your customers to see how they use your product. Of course, the answer may well be different for different customers. Some people choose a certain car to make them look good; others to feel safe; and others to enjoy the ride.

Unless you know why prospects and customers buy your product, you can't properly market or sell. You will be blind to the alternatives, opportunities, and threats that exist.

Change how you define your business from your product to its benefits for

the customer. Instead of saying, "We are innovation management consultants," say, "We help clients develop new sources of revenue and profit."

One definition of innovation is *an action that extends customer value*. So, to innovate, you need to know what the customer really values. You can then brainstorm how to extend that value.

Weekly, ask three questions: What business are we in? What do customers really value? In what other ways could that value be delivered? These questions lead to potent innovation. **SSE**

Paul Sloane speaks, leads workshops on innovation, and is the author of The Innovative Leader (Kogan Page). Visit www.destination-innovation.com.

ACTION: Redefine what business you are in.

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