
How To Stay In The Mind Of Your Prospect And Win The Sale

by BILL BROOKS

I frequently discuss the importance of following up with prospects and customers. Now, let's examine some real how-tos — ways to enable you to follow up in meaningful, powerful ways.

But, before we do that, let's talk about a real no-no. I was recently shopping for a car, and a salesperson followed up with me in a way that defies belief. Actually, he had been assigned to contact me since his manager (my original contact) was out of town that day. The new salesperson called my house and left word for me to call him back. Here was my question: Who is selling what to whom?

Did I call him back? You guessed it! It is the singular responsibility of the salesperson to do the proactive work of contacting a prospect — not vice versa. This seems like common sense, doesn't it? It is sometimes clear that the basics have to be explained over and over again.

Let's look at several effective ways to follow up with your prospects or customers:

- Be sure to take time to plan and schedule follow-ups and be sure to establish a format, outline or agenda for the actual one-on-one discussion. Don't just wing it!
- Carefully discern which prospects are the ones most easily justified as follow-up candidates. Remember, not all prospects are equal.
- Find a way to record the details related to each conversation. My recommendation is that you do this with some form of contact management software.
- Don't put it off. Always remember that if they are a prospect for you, they are just as likely a prospect for your competition.
- Develop a way for each contact to move you closer to something. Another meeting, a more advanced

presentation, an alternative product offering, a sale — or a referral.

- Design each contact for you to get more in-depth knowledge about your prospect. And use that knowledge to take your relationship to a higher level.
- Ensure that there is sufficient time between contacts so that you are not perceived as a pest or someone who has nothing else to do with your time. Allow sufficient time for your message to begin to sink into your prospect's mind, world and circumstance.
- Allow sufficient time for the contact. Realize that as the relationship becomes richer, more time will be required. It is not a sprint — sometimes it is a marathon.
- Ensure you have a good, productive, positive reason for each contact. This could be allowing sufficient time between contacts to allow your prospect to need additional information, it could be a promised contact to present different options or a commitment to provide something to the prospect. Remember, you need to have a legitimate reason for the contact.
- Listen to your prospect. What are they saying to you? Design your contact around what they say, not what you want to do.

I'd like to share another story with you. I was recently looking for a professional service provider for our firm. In my search I called two possible candidates. I was very precise with both as to what our time schedule needed to be. Each was clear with me in how they could respond to that schedule.

Candidate #1 called me within the time frame and even had several of their clients call me — people for whom I have great respect. The second called me very much later, left a voice mail and asked me to return the call.

In fact, candidate #1 also contacted the person in my firm who will be using the service! There was now depth in the account, strong validation of their capabilities and a perception that they legitimately wanted the business.

Of course, we selected candidate #1. I subsequently contacted #2 to tell them of our decision. After I conveyed the message, I was asked, "Why did you call me in the first place?" I was also treated to a very terse and short phone call that ended with the familiar phrase "Good luck to you." The interpretation of that? "You made the wrong choice, pal. Get out of my life. Goodbye."

What happened? Candidate #1 simply outsold candidate #2. How often are you outsold because of some of the same reasons? All things being equal, the salesperson with the best strategy for following up and delivering what the prospect wants — when they want it — will win the sale. □



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