



Generating Leads to Grow Your Business

EVERY BUSINESS NEEDS LEADS. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER YOURS IS A BRAND
NEW OPERATION OR A COMPANY THAT'S BEEN AROUND FOR 100 YEARS:

YOU NEED LEADS. MARKETING GURU RAY JUTKINS LIKED TO TALK

ABOUT WAYS TO FIND MORE OF THEM.

I'll tell you about Ray in the *Memories of Ray Jutkins* section on the next page, but let's concentrate on Ray's words now. He liked to remind me that leads come from two primary sources: Current customers (sell more to people who already know you) and prospects (sell to those who could buy what you offer, but don't).

This article, which is based on something that Ray wrote more than 20 years ago, will cover 10 top-level points that every business manager should consider, whether what's being sold is a product or a service and whether the target market is consumers or businesses. There are differences in techniques, of course, and I have updated some of the text, but the basics remain the same.

Differentiate: Your message must position your product or service using a *unique selling proposition* (USP). That term has been around for a century or more; today, some may know it as the *point of difference* (POD). Whichever term you use, identifying the USP or the POD is a critical step because it defines why someone might choose to buy from you instead of from another company.

What does your product or service offer that the other guy does not? What do you do differently that would appeal to a prospective buyer? What can you make available to the customer that is not available from others?

Address Needs: Your sales message must be aimed to the needs of your audience. That statement contains two parts and they're both important: *Needs* and *your audience*. People buy when



they can be shown you can fulfill their need. Sure, wants and desires are important, but needs are essential. Most often, emotion and feeling (also known as *warm and fuzzy*) come first, but bottom-line decisions are made on the basis of reason, thinking, and a true need.

The other key consideration is *your audience*. Far too many sales messages address the wants and needs of the person or company that has a product or service to sell. The people you're selling to don't much care whether you're happy or satisfied.

All they want is for you to meet *their* needs.

Communicate: It is almost impossible to contact your customers too often. In fact, most

of us fail to talk to our customers nearly as often as we should. By mail, phone, fax, e-mail, or in person. Each type of communication is important.

You may question that because so many companies send too much e-mail. Their message are filled with little but useless, self-serving blather.

Being ahead of his time, Ray went on to explain that each time you reach out to a client or a prospect, you must have something *worthwhile* to say or something useful to offer.

In other words, send messages that your customers will look forward to receiving.

Define Objectives: Before you create a lead-generation program, think about what you want to

have happen. Be precise. "I want more prospects" is no more precise than "I want a car." As Yogi Berra is reputed to have said, "If you don't know where you're going, you might not get there!" What do you expect to happen? What is the timetable? How much time, money, and effort can you invest to obtain a qualified lead?

An important part of that question occurs at the very end. You want more than just *leads*; you want *qualified leads*. Somebody may want, or even need, what you have to sell, but may not have enough money to afford it. Concentrate on creating a lead generation program that eliminates those who aren't qualified.

Creative Follows Strategy: Possibly the worst instruction you can provide to a writer, photographer, or designer is *be creative*. By definition, that's what these people do. They create the words, the images, and the design that will be used in your lead-generation program. They do not create the program. That's your job.

The creative components reflect your marketing strategy. Your plan. If there's no strategy, the creative may well be pretty, nicely written, and well designed; but it will have little to do with your product or service.

You must establish the objectives. Frequently your current customers can help you accomplish this. They'll tell you what's important and what's not. Learn from your customers. When you do, not only will you gain more business from them, but you'll also learn how to find new customers.

Quality or Quantity? Although it's not impossible, obtaining both quantity and quality is difficult when it comes lead generation. Pick one or the other.

There is no right or wrong answer in general, but right or wrong will apply to your situation. If you're offering a low-cost item that needs to be sold in bulk, you're looking for quantity. On the other hand, if you're offering a high-cost product or service that will be affordable to only a small segment of the marketplace, you should be looking for quality.

Sometimes you may need lots of new business leads in a hurry, so quality is less important. Or maybe you can accept a low quantity of leads if the ones you receive are highly qualified. Plan accordingly.

Look in the Mirror: Know how you are perceived by your audience. What is your posi-

tion? Are you well known in the marketplace or a newcomer? Is your brand more like the Lexus LS or the Chevrolet Spark? It doesn't really matter *which* you are, but it does matter that your message reflects your position. Just as Lexus would never use Chevrolet Spark messaging to sell a Lexus LS, neither would General Motors use Lexus messaging to sell a Chevrolet.

Know the Decision Maker: Who makes the buying decision for your product or service? This defines your marketplace. Do trade associations, industry groups, manufacturers, or suppliers have any product research available to assist? What about your own business history?

For business-to-business lead generation, determine which business codes are your best prospects. Perhaps your product or service is a better fit for large companies, or small companies. Does location make a difference? Do you have more opportunities with companies that have highly stable workforces or those where turnover is constant?

Similar considerations need to be made for sales to consumers. Does your product or service resonate more with couples or singles? High income or low? Young or old? City, suburban, exurban, or rural dwellers? New England or Southwest?

Be Realistic: What are the honest *appeals* of your product? What true *benefits* do customers receive from your product or service? What features do you have that are of value to those who could buy from you? In other words: *What makes a real difference to your buyer?*

These considerations might not be static. Are there current trends you can capitalize on? What does your offer give to prospects that they cannot get elsewhere? In other words, *what's in it* for the prospect?

Consider Direct Mail: Twenty years ago, Ray wrote "Direct mail continues to be a strong lead generation tool. When you create your direct mail program, remember short vs. long is usually better." Direct mail is used a lot less these days, but that doesn't mean it's not the right choice for you.

Direct mail can be precisely targeted and the mailing can be designed in a way that virtually guarantees the recipient will open it. In some cases, a series of post cards works well, both for business and consumer lead generation. Ω

Memories of Ray Jutkins

I met Ray Jutkins in New York City during the late 1980s. He was the instructor for a 2-day program presented by the Direct Marketing Association and the US Postal Service; I was in the audience.



We talked a few times and apparently we saw something in each other because we kept in touch. When I started working with websites, I pitched the idea to Ray and he turned me down. A few years later, he called and said that he wanted to set up a website, but he was leaving for a week-long teaching session in New York and I was leaving for a week-long teaching session in San Jose.

During the week we were both away from home base, we discussed the site's basic goals by e-mail and a week or two later, the site was operational. Things were a lot simpler in those days, but the basics are the same now as they were then. Get them right and you're off to a good start.

When I met him, Ray was running an ad agency in Los Angeles, but by the time we started working together, he had moved to Roll, Arizona (about 30 miles east of Yuma and several miles beyond the end of paved roads.) From there, he provided worldwide consulting services and regularly traveled to every continent but Antarctica to explain better marketing techniques.

Ray and I continued to work together for the next 10 years and would no doubt be doing so today had leukemia not taken his life far too soon. He left behind a remarkable body of work and this month's newsletter is based on his writings. Ω



n-Lighten.us

Division of William Blinn Communications

179 Caren Ave., Worthington, Ohio 43085
614/859.9359 • www.n-lighten.us