



## “Hello, I’m Ready to Buy Whatever You’re Selling!”

EVER RECEIVE A PHONE CALL LIKE THAT? PROBABLY NOT; THE SALES PROCESS DOESN’T WORK THAT WAY. BUYERS, WHETHER INDIVIDUALS OR BUSINESSES, START WITH MILD INTEREST, PROGRESS THROUGH INVESTIGATION AND ANALYSIS, AND MAY ARRIVE AT A BUYING DECISION. HOW DO YOU NURTURE THAT PROCESS?

More accurately, do you have a plan and is the plan working? Do you have a way to measure the success of your plan? There’s little question that a well-designed plan, when worked consistently, will improve sales.

Some sales people make the mistake of assuming that every person who expresses interest is ready to buy and then eliminating a lead at the first sign of resistance. Have you ever heard this: “The idiot just didn’t understand why he needed my *frammis flogger*”? A large part of the sales process must be invested in teaching, nurturing, and moving the slightly interested potential buyer through the process.

### Nurture Your Leads

NURTURING IS MORE THAN JUST REFERRING THE PROSPECT TO YOUR WEBSITE AND MORE THAN JUST SENDING A SERIES OF “DRIP-MARKETING” NEWSLETTERS. IF THE PROCESS DOESN’T DEEPEN THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POTENTIAL CLIENT, IT’S NOT NURTURING.

Likewise, if the process doesn’t allow you to learn more about their needs so that you can identify their problem and present an appropriate solution, it’s not nurturing.

Gleanster Research reported, following a survey that was conducted in 2010, that fully half of all incoming leads are not “sales ready”. If anything, this seems overly optimistic, and it clearly illustrates why there is a need to nurture prospects to ensure that your product or service is



the one that they select.

Regardless of whether you’re selling to a business or an individual, prospects are *people*.

In other words, there are more similarities than differences when comparing business-to-consumer (B2C) and business-to-business (B2B) processes. Whether a person is buying a new sofa or a corporation is seeking janitorial services for their 30-story world headquarters, there is a need to earn the trust of the seller.

The buyer’s ultimate decision will probably involve an emotional connection to the provider, which calls to mind the ancient adage that says *sales people must sell themselves before they can sell a product or service*.

**Bottom line: Earn the prospect’s trust.**

It’s common to show the sales process as a funnel because a large number of leads enter at the top and are then evaluated and nurtured through the buying process.

### Building Trust

ESTABLISHING TRUST AND CREDIBILITY DEPEND ON ESTABLISHING YOUR AUTHORITY IN THE MARKETPLACE. IF YOU’RE SELLING JANITORIAL SERVICES, YOU MUST BE THE PERCEIVED AUTHORITY ON THE SUBJECT.

Beyond this, you need to be seen as a trusted advisor. When your prospective client believes that you fully comprehend the challenges they face and can provide a workable solution, you are a credible resource in the prospect’s eyes. Trust and credibility reduce apprehension that a buyer feels when considering a new supplier.

## Customers or Clients?

You may have noticed that I use the term “client” instead of “customer” and perhaps you wonder why. Consider the simple dictionary definitions of the two words:

- **Customer:** a person who purchases goods or services from another.
- **Client:** a person or group that uses professional advice or services.

Customers buy from you. Clients have a relationship. Some might say that this is just a semantic difference, but words control our thoughts. When you think about clients as people who have relationships with you and your business instead of people who simply buy your product or service, you will treat them as clients. When you treat people as clients, their perception of you, your credibility, and your authority will all be enhanced.

Prospective clients may come to you from your advertising or website, or they may reach out to

you because an existing client referred them to you. Referrals are always the best possible leads, but even they aren't immediately ready to buy.

To work out the most effective lead nurturing strategy, you first need to know what your ideal client looks like.

You can base this description on current clients. How large is the company that's best suited to be a client? What is the income level of the individual who would qualify to be one of your clients? Comparing your new prospects to these metrics will give you an idea of how good a match the business or individual is for you.

To build your reputation as a credible advisor who's worthy of the prospective client's trust requires that you provide high-quality information that is useful.

In other words, don't just whip up a self-serving “white paper” that contains nothing more than your advertising. If it's not helpful and relevant, the prospect will discard it after reading the first paragraph. This is bad on two levels: First, your message wasn't delivered; second, your reputa-

tion has suffered because you didn't fulfill the prospective client's expectations.

“Case studies” that are thinly veiled advertisements that don't fit the prospect's needs won't work either, and just sending a series of drip-marketing e-mails will succeed only if every single one is relevant to the recipient.

So when you're working on what case studies, best-practice guides, or white papers to offer, keep your ideal client in mind and tailor the information to that company or that individual. Then, offer these publications without cost or obligation, requiring only an individual's name, a company name (for B2B clients), and an e-mail address that you can use to deliver the information.

A well-written, useful publication will be forwarded to others, automatically extending your reach, your audience, and your reputation as a thought-leader in your business area.

We'll continue next month with the idea of nurturing prospects through the buying cycle. Ω

# Communication Can Make or Break an Organization

BY A.J. STINNETT,

IN AN ORGANIZATION, COMMUNICATION IS DEFINED AS THE FREE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION. MORE INFORMATION IS MORE EFFECTIVE.

Major General Charles Henry discusses this in his book, *A General's Insights into Leadership and Management*. It is also defined as the transfer of information from one person to another.

The concept of clear and complete information is not difficult. There are three primary aspects: Information, motivation, and control

**Information.** Communication provides information for decisions. Managers need information about alternatives, the future, and potential outcomes to make appropriate decisions.

**Motivation.** Communication encourages commitment to organizational objectives which enhances individual and group performance.

**Control.** Communication makes clear duties, responsibilities and authority. This permits control.

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Emotion is an important consideration, too. Communication permits the expression of feelings (opinions and attitudes) which help satisfy social needs.

Henry Mintzberg estimated, in a 1975 *Harvard Business Review* article (“The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact”), that communication consumes 59% of the time of first level managers (supervisors) and 89% of the time of middle managers.

Over the last 25 years, the successful and profitable executives and managers I've encountered have all spent a somewhat larger percentage of their time communicating than indicated in the Mintzberg article.

Is communication within your organization as effective as it should be? Ω



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