



Romancing Your Prospects to “Yes”

LAST MONTH, WE BEGAN TO EXAMINE THE PROCESS OF NURTURING PROSPECTS AND TURNING THEM INTO CLIENTS. THIS MONTH, WE CONTINUE THE PROCESS.

If you need a copy of last month’s newsletter, you’ll find it at www.blinn.com/archive.html, or drop me a line and I’ll send you the PDF.

Last month, we discussed the importance of nurturing leads and building trust with prospective clients. We also explained why it’s better to think of people who might buy your product or service as *clients* instead of *customers*.

Let’s continue with the process of talking TO prospective clients instead of talking AT them.

Dialog, not Monologue

ASSUMING YOUR PROSPECT IS NOT ONE OF THE FEW WHO CALLS AND IMMEDIATELY BEGS YOU TO TAKE THEIR MONEY, YOUR NURTURING CAMPAIGN BEGINS AS SOON AS YOU HAVE ESTABLISHED THAT THE CLIENT HAS INTEREST IN YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE.

Some misguided marketers simply start firing off e-mail messages and having sales reps call. This is a bad idea. It’s an old aphorism, but we have one mouth, two ears, and two eyes. Use what you have the most of to gather information about the prospect before opening your mouth.

What’s called for is a conversation. Speak less; listen and watch more. Learn what problems the prospect is facing and think about how your business can help. Avoid the urge to tell the prospect about all the features and benefits you can offer. Until you know which features and benefits will be of use to the prospect, you risk alienating the person you’re talking with by assuming that you know what they need.

Determining what the prospect wants or needs begins with knowing what information was requested. If the prospect downloaded “How

Not the recommended way to communicate with prospective clients



to Select a Sofa that Fits Your Lifestyle”, you can be reasonably certain that the prospect is looking for furniture, specifically a sofa, and then you can begin to provide additional information about buying sofas — manufacturing techniques, choices for people with and without children or pets, convertible sofas for those who have frequent house guests, and so on.

But before bombarding prospects with messages, ask how they prefer to be contacted. Do they prefer e-mail, mail, or phone? Would

they welcome weekly updates on the subject? Those who are truly interested in what you have to offer will generally provide this information and they will appreciate your being honest and direct about it.

Make It Personal

THERE IS NO COOKIE-CUTTER TEMPLATE FOR WHAT TO PROVIDE OR WHEN BECAUSE EVERY BUSINESS IS DIFFERENT.

Your typical sales cycle may be 3 days or 18 months. What you provide to the prospect during the period will vary, but above all it needs to be personal as you strive to create a sincere relationship with your potential customer. Do not take your cue from dramatist and novelist Jean Giraudoux, who said “The secret of success is sincerity. Once you can fake that you’ve got it made.”

Anything you send to a prospect must be focused precisely on their needs. Specific case studies, demos, and videos may all fit into the mix as long as they are concise, accurate, and useful. Heavy sales promotions are inappropriate and call into question your sincerity about helping the prospective client.

You don’t need to write a unique message for each customer, though. Consider changing the subject line and the headline. Possibly a few tweaks would be appropriate within the copy, or feeding back some information that the prospect has already supplied. Highly-targeted messages have a great advantage.

Choose Your Target

SENDING SPECIFIC MESSAGES TO SPECIFIC PROSPECTS REQUIRES THAT YOU SEGMENT THE

MARKET. THE PERSON WHO IS LOOKING FOR A SIMPLE SOFA IS DIFFERENT FROM THE PERSON WHO IS MOVING INTO A NEW HOUSE AND NEEDS FURNITURE FOR EVERY ROOM.

Look for ways to segment your prospects. Among the most common selectors:

Demographics: For individuals, consider postal code, income, marriage status, and other common indicators. For businesses, how large is the company, how long has it been in business, and what kind of market share does it command? In addition to these considerations, look for other indicators that will allow you to identify your ideal clients.

Buying Cycle: Are they ready to purchase now, just gathering information, or actively comparing companies they might deal with?

Propose!

WHEN YOU'VE IDENTIFIED THE PROSPECTIVE CLIENT'S NEEDS AND COMMUNICATED YOUR EXPERIENCE AND YOUR SINCERITY, IT'S TIME TO PROPOSE THE NEXT STEP.

By now, the prospective client should recognize you as an authority so that a sales person will be able to have a meaningful conversation.

Yes, you'll lose some prospects at this point. Maybe the buyer can't currently afford what you're offering. You don't have to lose a potential client; instead, recycle lead that won't be productive immediately so that additional contacts can be made later.

Some of the proposals will result in sales. When the sales team has done that, your work with the (no-longer-prospective) client has just begun. This is the time to continue building the relationship because existing clients are the best source of new business: The client may buy more of what you have to sell, purchase related products, or refer you to a friend or other business.

One of the best ways to continue the relationship is being proactive following the sale. Contact the client with additional information about how to use your product or service, confirm that everything is working the way the client expected. Skip this step at your peril! The new client who has a problem with what they bought may feel that what you sold was defective. As a result, you'll lose any future sales to that client and you'll lose the client's good will in the market place. [Ω](#)

Protecting Yourself from Identity Theft

DID YOU KNOW THAT ABOUT 4% OF ALL AMERICANS WILL LOSE THEIR IDENTITY TO THIEVES IN ANY GIVEN YEAR? THERE'S NO WAY TO GUARANTEE YOUR SAFETY, BUT YOU CAN TILT THE PLAYING FIELD IN YOUR FAVOR.

The identity theft racket worldwide steals about \$40 billion annually and, if your identity is stolen, you'll spend more than \$600 and 40 hours on the phone to recover your identity even if your bank makes good on all of the fraudulent purchases!

As with most problems, avoidance is better than recovery. I spoke with ADP Chief Security Officer (CSO) Roland Cloutier, who described to me ways to cut the "industry's" rapid growth.

With a \$40 billion annual haul, collectively the thieves are larger than many major corporations and even some countries. As the CSO of ADP, Cloutier is responsible for ADP's cyber, information protection, risk, workforce protection, crisis management, and investigative security operations worldwide. In other words, he knows what he's talking about.

ADP is a gigantic company. As a provider of business outsourcing and human capital management solutions, it serves more than 620 thousand clients in more than 125 countries. Needless to say, security is a very big deal with ADP because of the kinds of data the company handles.

Be Your Own Firewall

CLOUTIER CALLS ON PEOPLE TO BE "HUMAN FIREWALLS" BECAUSE NO TECHNOLOGY CAN PROTECT US FROM EVERYTHING. IF YOU DEPEND ON AN ANTIMALWARE APPLICATION TO SHIELD YOU FROM IDENTITY THEFT, YOU'RE WELL ON THE WAY TO BECOMING A VICTIM.

Being a human firewall involves taking time to learn something about security. Think of it as a defensive driving class for computers. It also means being aware of your surroundings, much as you would be when walking on an unfamiliar street. And it's important to maintain a certain amount of healthy paranoia and skepticism.

You can improve your security, Cloutier says, by consistently following 4 essential rules. First, be aware of your situation. If you're applying for a loan and you're in a bank, expect to be asked for a lot of identification. But if you receive an e-mail or phone call that claims to be from your bank and you're asked to "verify" your account number, user name, password, or PIN — beware! "Never give out personal information unless you know exactly who you're dealing with," Cloutier says.

Second, use a shredder. Sensitive papers should be shredded before being disposed of. Some people make a good living sifting through trash looking for papers with account numbers.

Third, run a clean computer. Don't open attachments or click links from people you don't know. If the message appears to be from someone you do know, ask yourself if the wording is in character for the sender. On websites, Cloutier says, "Look for 'https' or a picture of a lock in the address line before purchasing or giving out information."

Finally, when bank and credit card statements arrive, review them promptly and carefully. The sooner you notice and report a problem, the less damage a criminal can inflict.

If your identity is stolen, change passwords and report the problem to your bank and the police. Don't expect that police will be able to solve the crime, but banks and insurance companies will insist on having a reference to a police report. [Ω](#)



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Division of William Blinn Communications

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