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10 Creative Lead Generation Strategies to Grow Your Business

New people to talk with is vitally important to your business success!

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As a direct marketer, it's vitally important to continually generate high quality leads for your business. This two part report focuses on 10 low cost, highly effective lead generation strategies.

1) A-Z List

In order to begin the list, you'll need a three-ring notebook. Label the first page with the letter "A", and then place a few empty filler pages behind this letter, then label another page "B", and add some empty pages, then label another page "C" and add some empty pages- continue this for the entire alphabet.

Starting with any letter, begin to write down all the people, places, names of companies, cities, anything and everything that begins with that letter- aim for an exhaustive list.

Each time you meet someone new, add his/her name to your A-Z list. It's wise to spend about 10-15 minutes, faithfully, each week, adding to your list. In this way, you begin to amass an ongoing, growing database of people you know and people you'd like to meet.

Very soon, you'll have an extensive list of potential leads.

2) Mind Mapping

This is a creative lead generation technique to help you solve any problems or blocks around generating more leads. It is a fun, inspiring process.

Start with a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. You might want to save your mind maps in some kind of binder or folder as they are good resources to refer back to periodically.

Once you have a piece of paper, write the 'problem' or 'question' in the middle of the page. For example, "how can I bring more customers or dealers into my business?" You place a circle around this question, and then draw a series of spokes moving outward from this circle (like the sunrays in a child's drawing). At the end of each sun ray, you quickly and easily write out a possible solution- or, in some cases, a word or phrase that comes to you. Once you have written a word or phrase, you then circle that and draw additional sunrays from that circle and repeat the process. So the page will end up looking like a series of suns, each connected by a line or idea.

3) Email Newsletter/Ezine

Starting an email newsletter or ezine is both a marketing and a lead generation technique. To set up a newsletter, you need to figure out a name, find people to subscribe, and make it a point to offer relevant, useful, informative and valuable content.

The advantages of email newsletters are that they are inexpensive to produce, easy to send out, and offer a means for customers to click through to your website or sales pages if they would like more information. If you are providing good, usable content, very often your subscribers will stay with you for years. Be sure to highlight customer appropriate changes to your business- i.e. are you doing some charity or volunteer work that they might like to know about?

4) Contests/Giveaways

Contests or giveaways can be a really fun way to generate interest and excitement in your business. The majority of people enjoy obtaining something for free, and the higher the perceived value, the more excited people are to participate. To use this to generate leads offer an item for free if people take a specified action (i.e. visit your website, sign up for your newsletter; know the right answer to a question).

These are really fun, and people love to win- so you might create a tip sheet or small product/package to give away and start holding contests/giveaways to increase your customer base.

5) Updates to Your Website

Updating your website is an important lead generation technique, and is a way to retain your current customers or clients. The main purpose of your website should be to educate and inform the consumer; to encourage him or her to stay aware of your business and to take the next step when s/he has a problem you can solve. The more current you keep your website; the more likely you are to have a flow of new leads and potential customers and dealers coming into your business.

Providing good, solid website content is a great way to generate repeat business and new leads- plus, it's generally very cost-effective, and gives you a great deal of credibility and visibility with your target customers.

6) Storyboarding

A creative lead generation technique which can aid those of you who are visual thinkers or visual planners. In this process, you will take a series of sticky notes (like Post-It Notes) and create space on a blank wall. At one end of the wall you put where you are now (Point A) and, at the other end of the wall, you put your desired outcome (Point B) - for example: 10,000 new customer names. Then, with the remaining Post It Notes, you chart out (map out) all the steps which go from Point A to Point B. It's good, in this process, to just let the ideas flow- get as many sticky notes up on the wall as you can.

7) Free (Tele)Classes or Workshops

Offering a free "sample" of what you can do is a great way to showcase your experience and generate interest in your business. A free (tele)class or (tele)workshop enables you to easily make contact with many interested prospects at one time, saving you the time and effort of arranging individual meetings. Use these classes as a platform for sharing your knowledge, helping build your visibility, and increasing your credibility among your target market.

8) Direct Mail

Direct mail refers to any promotional or business item you will mail out to prospects. It might include business cards, postcards, brochures, advertisements, etc. This strategy is especially useful for those of you who work in a well-defined geographic location and/or can tightly segment out your market population.

Directly mail potential customers/prospects and invite them to visit your website, sign up for a contest, or give them something for free. The action you want them to take is one that will bring them into your business as a customer or business partner- so, at minimum, you want to have a way to capture their interest level (like having them go to a special page on your website and entering a promotional code so you know they came from your direct mail piece), and some way of following up in the future.

9) Coopetition

Coopetition - a mix of “cooperation” and “competition”.

> ***This concept refers to the idea that you can partner with your competitors to increase your leads and sales.***

One approach might look like this: You have customers in your database who have not bought from you, or who have expressed interest in products you don’t carry- but your competitor does. Your competitor may have similar names in his database. In a coopetitive arrangement, you both agree to share the names of customers which would benefit the other business, and, in an ethical, appropriate manner, you begin to market to these prospects that your competitor could not convert.

10) Joint Ventures

Joint venturing is another way to team up with other businesses. In this model, you team up with another business which offers products that are geared to your target market. For example, a joint venture might be created between a company selling vitamins and one selling fitness equipment (based on the supposition that people who buy vitamins also exercise). Customers who purchase fitness equipment might be given a coupon for a free bottle of vitamins- or people who buy a particular brand of nutritional supplement (let’s say for joint pain) might be given a discount coupon for a piece of fitness equipment that relieves joint pain and/or strengthens your joints.

What separates a joint venture from coopetition is that, in a joint venture, people are partnering together and there is some compensation traded for the arrangement.

Joint ventures are powerful because they use the concept of multiplication- when two people come together, each bringing their networks and spheres of influence, the synergy that is created can generate exponential growth for both partners.

Terri Levine, The Guru of Coaching®, spent years in network marketing and was number one in sales for many years. She didn't like to sell by trickery or manipulation and created a process she calls Sell-Without-Selling to help people do what they love, buy! She has authored over a dozen books including the bestseller *Coaching is for Everyone*. Her new book is being released January 9, 2009 called *Sell Without Selling: Lessons from The Jungle for Sales Success.* She can be reached at www.TerriLevine.com or 877-401-6165.