

A virtual no-cost' marketing program to help grow your business

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By Frank Williams

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Not all marketing programs require extensive analysis or an R&D investment to aid in the growth of the business. Some are simple, easy and cost as little as the time it takes to make a phone call.

One practice I wish that every CEO and senior executive within any company would learn is the importance and power of routinely communicating with the customer. I didn't learn this lesson until late in my career, but I can tell you it became a valuable business habit.

Weekly I would call between 3-10 customers. Even when I was traveling, I would carve out the time to make my customer calls. My targets were accounts that recently received products from us. I found it to be a golden opportunity for me to take the customer's pulse on how we performed. At the same time I would have senior people that reported directly to me do the same. Our company had about 5000 total accounts. Between my staff and me we were able to make about 30-40 calls per week. This meant we could essentially contact about 50% of our accounts per year. I can assure you we learned a tremendous amount about our customers and our customer service level. And did so at a negligible cost - basically the price of a phone call.

When was the last time your CEO really talked with a customer? Think of the possibilities that could generate from a CEO-customer conversation. Why stop at the CEO? What about any senior executive at the director or VP level? Wouldn't it be nice if the VP of operations picked up the phone and talked to a few customers per week? Or what about the Quality Assurance manager speaking directly to the customer. Not because he has a problem, but to find out if he was satisfied with everything. A pro-active approach to customer service. These contacts always turn out to be a win-win situation. If you find that something is wrong, then it can be corrected quickly. After all, who better to solve a customer problem, then a senior executive in charge? If nothing is wrong, then the VP can smoothly end the call by asking if the customer has the latest literature or knows about the newest product released. The VP could take one more impressive step and offer the customer his telephone number to his office in the unlikely event that the normal company support system fails. Think about the

walk-away' message the customer has about your company.

Over the years, studies consistently suggest that customers' vote with their feet when confronted with poor service. I call this the silent vote because you don't know the customer is gone until it's too late. Most likely after he begins purchasing from your competitor. These same studies state that a direct correlation exists between business shift and the depth of your business relationship. In other words, the less you know about your customer, the higher the probability and the faster he will turn to your competitor when he has problems. And most business people know it takes more money and effort to get a new customer than to retain an old one. Therefore, finding ways to strengthen the bond you have with each existing customer will pay dividends time and again.

Customers tend to remember conversations from non-selling people. Sales people still have a slight stigma attached to them. However, when customers know more people within a company it gives them a cozy' feeling and provides added flexibility to communicate problems before turning into lost business. An on-going customer calling program is an easy and effective way to add more glue to the customer-company relationship.

Down in New Orleans, they have a wonderful word: "lagniappe" (LAN-yap). It means getting a valuable extra at no extra charge, sort of like 14 donuts for the price of a dozen. You should find ways to give your customer more value. Talking with him on a regular basis will make your company stand out. In today's fiercely competitive world giving a customer more than they expect is a sure way of retaining him for future business.

Start your executives calling customers today. The value proposition is immense!

What's Missing From Your Virtual Assistant Business Website That's Costing You Clients

By Karen Fritscher-Porter

If you're a virtual assistant with a business website promoting your VA business and your website is not contributing to increasing your client list, take action. There are a lot of reasons your website might not be delivering prospective clients to your virtual assistant business. One reason could be your web page headline (and I don't mean your tagline, logo or company name). For instance, your website home page may not have a headline. Or it may not be a good one.

Put a headline near the top of your web page that stands out and gets read first. Put a BENEFIT to your reader in that headline. I'm a prospect. I've heard of virtual assistants. I'm not sure what they can do for me. I think they can help me grow my business or take some of my work-related tasks off of my hands. I come to your website (this article isn't touching on how I found your website—just assume I did find it). The FIRST THING I want to see at your website is a big headline that says something like... "I Can Give You Back Your Time to Strategically Grow Your Business. Let Me Take Over These Three Admin Tasks for You" "Database Entry. Answering Routine Customer Emails. Bill Paying... Booooooring!!!! I Know Someone Who Will Do Those Mundane Tasks For You." "Can I Help You

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Double Your Business for the Price You Pay For Lunch Daily" "Discover How to Spend More Time With Your Family. Hire a Virtual Assistant to Show You The Way." "Grow Your Business Quicker. Increase Revenues Faster. Outsource Your Administrative Tasks To Me."

And those are just a few impromptu examples I devised to illustrate the point in this article. I am not a professional copywriter. You can consult other sources for copywriting tips that tell you how to write a "great" headline. I'm just telling you to have a headline on your virtual assistant business website. It's good marketing! Make your headline solve my problems. Tell me what you can do for me. Tell me that before you tell me who you are. I don't care who you are at first. I don't care about the technical definition of a virtual assistant. My immediate thought is what can you do for me. Blast that out at me in a big headline on your virtual assistant business sales page (your website) and I promise I'll stick around to read your subheadline. Shout something useful to me in your subheadline and I promise I'll go on to read the first paragraph of copy that appears next on your website. Keep hooking me with benefits and I'll go on to read about your specific virtual assistant services, rates and experience. And THEN I'll contact you for a more specific quote and interview. Don't do that and I'm gone within seconds of opening your website. Make your headlines specific and relevant. Be creative. Make them clear. Make them visible. Make them client centered. Your website IS a marketing tool for your virtual assistant business. Use it. And use it wisely.

Karen Fritscher-Porter publishes

– a global directory of virtual

assistants for hire to small businesses and home-based businesses. If you're a virtual assistant, learn how to boost your income, not your hours. Subscribe to the 100% free VA Marketing Tips Toolkit Series at

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