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Bridging the Chasm from Lead to Loyal Customer

By Julie Chance

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by: **Julie Chance**

Bridging the Chasm from Lead to Loyal Customer: A Step by Step Guide for Developing Awareness, Building Credibility and Acquiring Customers

Have you ever watched a documentary about climbing Mount Everest? If so, you will undoubtedly remember one specific segment of the journey where the climbers cross a chasm, one carefully placed step after another, using aluminum ladders strung end to end. For me, just the thought of it is enough to cause an anxiety attack!

There is a similar chasm between your product or service and your potential customers, even if it is only in the potential customers' mind. And for them, the thought of crossing that chasm is enough to cause a severe case of anxiety.

Picture a group of your potential customers, standing at the edge of a chasm on Mount Everest and you and your product or service standing on the other side. It is your job and the role of your marketing efforts to help potential clients cross that chasm one step at a time. At this stage, your immediate objective is not to get them to purchase. It is simply to get them to take that first step out onto the ladder, followed by one more step, and then another until they reach the ultimate decision to purchase.

It is as ludicrous to expect a potential customer to reach a purchase decision in one step as it would be to expect a Mount Everest adventurer to cross a chasm in one step. So how can you begin to move your potential customers across the purchase chasm?

· Step One – Awareness and Knowledge: Before someone can purchase a product or service they must be aware of it. They must also have knowledge about what problems the product or service will solve for them. They must be able to picture in their minds the benefit they will receive from using the product or service, and that picture must be enticing enough to motivate them to take that first step.

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At this phase, your objective is to make potential customers aware of your product or service, generally through mass media type activities, advertising, direct mail, articles, public speaking, etc. and then to get them to take the first step by requesting additional information. You might offer a brochure, free report, newsletter subscription or other informational item in exchange for contact information. The key is to offer something that:

- * Is of value to your potential client
- * Provides him or her with additional knowledge about your product or service and how it will solve his or her problems
- * Poses a very low level of risk or obligation on the part of the prospective customer.

· Step two – Liking and Preference: Awareness alone is not enough. Potential customers must also have a positive disposition regarding your product or service. Potential customers must trust that you will deliver what you say you will. Several years ago there was an insurance company that did a tremendous job of building awareness through television advertising. However, the ads were so obnoxious that I'm sure the company ranked quite low on the liking, preference and credibility scale.

At this stage, the objective is to get those potential customers who took the first step to take a second step by requesting additional information perhaps a video or booklet, calling for a free consultation, signing up for a free seminar or teleconference, purchasing an e-book, etc. For example, a trainer might gain credibility and allow potential customers to "sample" their product by offering free, hour long presentations on topics related to their area of specialty. Again, the offer must be of value to the client, and should pose a slightly higher level of risk, obligation or commitment on the part of the potential customer.

· Step Three - Conviction and Purchase: The final step in the process is getting those potential customers who have begun the journey across the chasm by requesting information and then following up on the information requested to actually make the decision to purchase. In this step, personal, one-on-one selling becomes the primary method of achieving the objective. And, if you have developed a relationship with the potential client throughout their journey, this step should be as simple as reaching out to take their hand as they reach the end of the ladder and step off onto the ground. And reassuring them that they have made the right decision by embarking on the journey.

While the process is simple, implementation takes a committed and consistent effort. It may take as many as five to 15 exposures to your product or service for a potential client to move through the process and cross the chasm from lead to loyal customer. The key is to plan those exposures so each one:

·Matches the level of the process where the potential customer currently is (i.e. direct mass media activities to potential customers in the awareness and knowledge phases, and use personal selling with prospective customers in the conviction and purchase phases).

·Builds on the previous exposure, automatically moving people through the buying process one step at

a time.

To begin the process of helping potential clients bridge the chasm to loyal customer ask yourself these questions:

1. What are three to five ways I can have an initial contact with members of my ideal customer group?
2. What can I provide as a free offer in exchange for contact information to get people to take the first step?
3. What are two or three intermediary steps I can encourage prospects to take?
4. What are the key promotional tools that I will use at each step?

Julie Chance is president of Strategies-by-DESIGN, a Dallas based firm that helps small businesses and service professionals Map A Path to Success by bridging the chasm from Lead to Loyal Customer. For more information or to sign up for our free Marketing Tips Newsletter go to

or call 972-701-9311.

Why Choose A Bridging Loan?

By John Mussi

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A bridging loan is a high interest, short term loan you would choose when you have a requirement for short term specific funding. For example, a bridging loan as the name implies is a loan used to "bridge" the financial gap between monies required for your new property completion prior to your existing property having been sold.

Bridging loans are short term loans arranged when you need to purchase a house but are unable to arrange the mortgage for some reason, such as there is a delay in selling your existing property.

Timing is of the essence when selling one property and buying another. Sometimes if you are looking for a new home and the right property becomes available, it is not always possible to wait until your current home is sold.

The beauty of bridging loans is that a bridging loan can be used to cover the financial gap when buying one property before the existing one is sold. For example, if you are in a chain, where you are buying a property at the same time as selling a property, it's possible that you'll be put in the situation where you need to complete your purchase, but the funds from your buyer are not available. You are now under pressure to complete on a particular date but do not have the funds available. This is where bridging loans come in. They are looked on as short term lending to cover a specific short term need.

A bridging loan can also be used to raise capital pending the sale of a property.

Bridging loans can be arranged for any sum between £25000 to a few million pounds and can be

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borrowed for periods from a week to up to six months. Because of the nature of bridging loans they can usually be arranged at short notice and within a few days.

A bridging loan is similar to a mortgage where the amount borrowed is secured on your home but the advantage of a mortgage is that it attracts a much lower interest rate. While bridging loans are convenient the interest rates can be very high. When considering a bridging loan please remember that you may be paying not only for the bridging loan but also for the mortgage on your existing property. Bridging loans are widely available and can usually be arranged by your existing mortgage provider. Although bridging loans are convenient, you need to consider the pitfalls too, like the high interest rates.

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John Mussi is the founder of Direct Online Loans who help UK homeowners find the best available loans via the

website.

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