



Prepared by: Greater Cincinnati and Dayton Chapters

Seven Keys to Generate Revenue

At no time do the fingers leave the hands

by Jack Scharff, author of *The Magic Answer*

INTRODUCTION: Building B2B (much of this also applies to the B2C world as well) revenue is not a dark secret. There really is no magic in finding new prospects. We seem to stumble across those who appear to be prospects every day.

However, wouldn't it be nice to systematize our marketing and sales process in the same way we follow a methodology when providing our products and services? The ideal is to establish a process that builds revenue and continually identifies prospects and their readiness to buy.

Many firms have a sales and marketing plan that was developed long ago or just came about as their business grew. Times change, the economy shifts, potential and current clients have new needs, different opportunities arise, and plans need to be updated.

None of this is news to you. However, in some companies, staff is so busy delivering products and services to their current clients, that needed attention to their marketing and sales cycle is put off to a later day. Reviewing the current system, or developing a new one, takes time that many firms don't seem to have -- but they should make the time.

Marketing and sales cycle: Seven essentials

Whether your company provides services only or a mix of products and services, the planning of the marketing and sales process is almost the same as for a products-only company. The difference is mainly in the actual selling process in the services area, which may be more "consultative" in approach.

Here are the seven essentials to a smooth and productive marketing and sales process:

1. Create your strategy.
2. Know your target audience.
3. Build the market message for your target group.
4. Determine the traffic drivers for your market message.
5. Develop calls to action that fit your traffic drivers.
6. Work the resultant sales pipeline.

7. Measure ROI to the key essentials.

1. Strategy -- The who, what and how

This first, crucial step is basically a company self-assessment. Understand what business you're in. Analyze your company's skill sets, and design products and services around them. Who will do what, and how will they do it?

Who? Assess your team and the expected roles of each member and of the team itself. All your employees are salespersons because their performance impacts customer attitudes and satisfaction. Even though their main responsibilities may be customer service, delivery or billing, sometimes these non-actual salespeople can make or facilitate a sale.

Specialization of roles by teams is usually most effective. But think about how teams can help each other to generate more revenue. Are they sharing enough information to do that?

What? Look at your team's capabilities. This is your true product. Take an honest and thorough inventory of their skill sets. They may have suited your past efforts, but are they the ones you need for the future? In the product world, stock that sits on the shelf is marked down so new stock can take its place. Make sure your "stock in trade" is not obsolete.

How? Is your original strategy still sound? Do you have the right processes in place so every sale is not just one and done? Have you productized your deliverable services yet, or do you still believe that they are too unique? Finally, have you systemized your marketing and sales processes?

Reviewing your strategy gives you a snapshot of today and provides insights to create a portrait of the future.

2. Target audience -- know your demographics

Once you know what you have to offer and have systems and staff to produce and deliver, the next step is to determine and study which audience is prime.

Not everyone is a candidate for your products and services. What industry or industries need your offerings? Horizontal, vertical, a particular niche -- what's most logical and practical? What are the titles of those willing and needing to receive your marketing message? How big of a group are they? What's the trend of their businesses?

Market research is the key to answering these questions. Look inward first. Start by analyzing your current clients -- their volume of business with you, how often they engage and how recently they dealt with you. This review and analysis will show you if you're on track and which types of customers are best. Recency, frequency and amount studies by source sometimes lead to new insights to bring immediate revenue increases.

You may also be surprised that some types of customers thought prime are not. Find out why not. Surveys to these groups and others may change your targeting strategy.

3. Marketing message -- the right and relevant content

After reviewing strategy and determining the audience that fits your offerings, it's now time to determine your message. "Build it and they will come" would be nice, but that philosophy works only in baseball films. To reach B2B prospects, marketing messages must create value in the minds of your prospects, not just communicate your company's value.

The strategy you reviewed, combined with your target audience, is the source for your marketing messages -- your mission, your positioning, your value analysis and statement, and your brand.

The next key is to develop content that's relevant to the target audience's everyday professional lives. Since your audience is business people and not consumers, your messages must help them solve (or identify with) a business problem they face.

Start with this mantra: Prospects buy when they **trust** your **value** is **applicable** to them and believe your company is **stable**.

Create a marketing message that fits the audience and the media used to deliver the message. Prospects want to know "What's in it for me?" Tell them, interest them, and show them with relevant content. A message that evokes curiosity and creates value and trust is your objective. This content may change somewhat, depending on the media you use.

When developing these messages, ask, what problems does your audience face? What are their hot buttons? What are their fears and opportunities? What gets in their way from solving their problems? How can you help them overcome any barriers to success?

4. Traffic drivers -- get them to the table

Now that your strategy and systems are in place; you know your target audience(s); and you have compelling marketing messages at the ready, it's time to reach out to prospects. What are the optimal ways and places to deliver your messages? Choices are many with varying costs. Should you use traditional, online or broad-based methods? What is the proper mix?

Direct mail, email, Web sites, print ads, broadcast, e-newsletters, Webinars, seminars, tradeshow, viral (referrals), telemarketing, public relations, blogs -- they all may offer value and should be considered based on budget, timeframe, offer and practicality to your particular business offerings and their complexities and costs.

Start by looking at your past efforts. What worked well and what didn't? Hopefully you know. Judge these on number of leads, quality of the leads, conversion rate, time and cost to achieve the conversions, and the expected lifetime value. If you don't know, start compiling the results.

Remember the famous John Wanamaker quote, "I know that half of my advertising is wasted. I just don't know which half." It's humorous, but tragic.

After you know what has worked, consider testing some of the other media and methods as well. Some that you haven't tried may turn out better. As you try them, measure results with special attention to quality of leads and conversion rate.

Prospects who invest an hour of their time at a Webinar exhibit a higher level of interest than those who respond with a brochure request. Those who read your monthly e-newsletter already know your company and are better prospects than those who download white papers. The medium helps qualify the prospect to some extent. But, you don't know until you test your way through each one.

5. Calls to action -- the offer, the benefit, the hand raisers

Calls to action are crucial to prospecting success. Good ones bring prospect leads at an acceptable cost. Bad ones either bring too many suspects rather than prospects or too few responses. Your marketing message must be compelling, and your call to action must make it easy for prospects to raise their hands.

A good call to action offers enough value to your prospects that they are willing to "pay" for it. Ask them to pay with their time and information about how the business problem they are attempting to solve affects them.

Often, calls to action are determined somewhat by the medium used. A white paper download is more effective on Web-based media than it is in a direct-mail piece. A print ad featuring a Webinar registration is not as effective as an email featuring the same registration. A snail-mailed survey is more expensive and less timely than an electronic survey.

Develop your calls to action carefully to fit the medium and the amount of pre-qualification you want. What action request and offer pulls the best in response and conversions? Measure the results of each and adapt future efforts.

6. Sales pipeline -- increase the flow and speed

Once calls to action are answered, prospects move through your qualification and sales process at varying rates depending upon the urgency of their need, the political environment they live in, their budget, your ability to gain their trust and their perceived value of your products and services.

Use these **Ten Commandments of Selling Professional Services** to keep prospects moving through your sales cycle.

1. Clarify complex customer issues.
2. Communicate the invisible.
3. Customize each solution.
4. Commit high-level executives to action.
5. Coordinate the selling team.
6. Compress the cycle time of selling.
7. Concentrate on the stars.
8. Control the cost of the sale.
9. Commercialize the sales promise.
10. Continually learn and grow.

Source: [Alexander Consulting](#)

Once trust is established, probe for specific problem areas, learn what and who are impacted, determine the resources needed to solve each problem, and develop a plan to solve the problems. When prospects agree to the plan and the terms for delivering the solutions, sales happen.

7. ROI -- three rules: measure, measure, measure

Measuring the return on investment of marketing and sales efforts is not an easy task. Yes, it's fairly simple to track the amount of leads against the expense of getting them. But then it gets murky. Leads from a variety of sources are not equal in quality. Some take more staff time to move through the sales cycle. Some convert to deliver revenue; others don't. Some conversions are one-time clients; others return with additional business and referrals for more business.

The ideal way may never be discovered, but here's a start:

1. Track prospects and assign "source codes."
2. Determine the lead generation costs.

3. Estimate the selling costs.
4. Determine the conversion rate.
5. Quantify the amount of revenue delivered.
6. Estimate the lifetime value of the clients.
7. Determine total acquisition costs.
8. Calculate the revenue return on investment.
9. Evaluate the expected future revenue.
10. Analyze your success.

By setting up unique classes of prospects (based on message, medium and call to action) and measuring the expense and return from each class, you'll be better prepared to make marketing decisions.

Reviewing these seven key components is an exercise that can bring you new, valuable insights to improve your company's marketing and sales cycle. It can also help you grow your business.

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