Your Customers and your Business Goals

How did you do on the start of your business marketing plan from my last Column? Were you able to focus on your business’s “market”? Did the questions, which I presented challenge you to think about some new “looks” at your business? I hope so.

Now we are ready to look at the next parts of your marketing plan for the new year. This week I want you to sit down and think about your “target customer” and how that group fits with your business’ goals. I will again ask you to think about some very strategic questions. The next steps are very simple and straightforward.

Step 2: Overview of Your Target Customer

I see too many small businesses that do their marketing with not much thought. Too often the decision is made to “just do something” and hope that does the trick. Remember you are spending precious dollars from our business. So I think you must be sure that you are spending your market efforts and dollars wisely. So, let me start with this common sense question to you. How are you going to develop a marketing strategy or plan if you haven’t done some hard looking at who is your customer and how you get your customers’ attention. So, I urge that your plan must contain some information about your customers (either existing customers or prospective customers). Your assignment here is to examine: 1) Who they are? 2) What do they want? and 3) What motivates them to buy?

Here, you can include a simple list of information about your customer, some basic demographic info and some more detailed information as it relates to your product, such as:

- Age
- Gender
- Any buying characteristics?
- How does my customer normally purchase similar products?
- Who’s the decision maker or primary buyer?
- What is your target customer’s motivation for buying (do they want to look good, learn to save money, increase health, etc.)?
- What kind of habits does your customer have, specifically where do they get their information (magazines, trade shows, newspapers, the web, etc.)?
- Do you have a niche that you are trying to target or appeal to?
- Are there any unifying criteria (they are all attorneys, accountants, hairdressers, etc.)?
- Any specifics (i.e., only estate attorneys)?
It may sound silly, but to be effective at this, write it down! Try to describe as much about your customer as you can.

Once you have completed this task, I now want you to tie this information back to your business. So here is the next step.

**Step 3: Your Business Goals**

Very briefly, list your company’s goals for the upcoming year: both marketing and sales goals. It’s important to put your goals down on paper. Make sure you include elements of your business that are possible to track so you can gauge your progress. Your goals should be:

- Sensible
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic
- Time Specific

For instance, a goal of “increasing sales of accounting software” is not very specific or measurable. But a goal of “increasing sales of accounting software by 20 percent over the next 12 months” is much more specific and measurable.

Your goal section should include information about your gross sales target for your business, goals for your marketing efforts as well as plans for future growth.

OK, that is your assignment for this week, identify your customers and write down what you want to accomplish this year. In my next column, I will address how you start to put the finishing touches on your plan by spending some time thinking about your strategies and tactics.

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Dean L. Swanson
Southeast Minnesota SCORE
c/o Rochester Area Chamber of Commerce
220 South Broadway, Suite 100
Rochester, MN 55904

[www.seminnesota.score.org/](http://www.seminnesota.score.org/)

*Dean is a volunteer SCORE Mentor and Regional Vice President for the North West Region*