



## ◆ ◆ Building Your Sales Pipeline ◆ ◆



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If you're reading this article, you would most likely fall into one of the following categories: a salesperson, a business owner, or both, or at least aspiring towards one (if not, please turn away now, I would hate to divulge my good secrets to an outsider sitting in a dentist's office waiting room). Often we go into business because we're too

good at our jobs, or we require stricter control over our own hours, or we are tired of being exploited by others and are seeking instead an opportunity to exploit ourselves, or our boss simply wears too much cologne; something inspires us along the way to spread our wings and fly solo. We have a knack for the technological, perhaps, or have found our niche in the art of helping others in the area of... whatever. We find ourselves with a marketable and highly sought skill and decide to venture into the hair-graying realm of ownership. What quickly follows is the confrontation of the fact that our skills in sales and marketing are most unfortunately just as important as the product or service we specialize in. We consider the outsourcing of this task to someone more qualified, we consider the question of whether we can afford it and whether it

will be worth it, and we pray to the business gods: Gods, give us the courage to invest in what's right, the strength to cope with the wrong ones, and some luck to make the difference.

Whether we are owners, or if we are employees whose job entails worrying about these problems just the same, we who are tangled in this happy web of sales must be alert about feeding the ol' insatiable spider; we must keep the pipeline full. Patience, they say, is often the greatest virtue, in regards to the fact that not all prospects are ready to buy now but here are some dirty little ideas with which to buck the system and expedite the success process.

### Purchase a contact management database system.

I'm a big fan of ACT. There are several different database systems on the market- find a database that will furnish you with some an edge. Choose a system that has the ability to set alarms and callbacks. These reminders allow for timely follow up, which are the surest bet to a future sale. You've heard the phrase that sometimes it's just about the right time, right place? Well if you can't depend on serendipity, your contact management database system will allow you to be the first one in and the last one out. Also, be sure the database allows you the flexibility to rename fields. This function allows you to develop the relationship between you and your prospect; be sure to carefully tract pertinent info such as birthdates, notes, record of conversation, etc.

### Purchase a targeted prospect list

National companies like InfoUSA and other list brokers in your area offer records of companies in your target market for as little as a few hundred dollars. Target your list of businesses by industry, employee size, region, zip code, sales revenue and key decision maker's name. Consumer lists are often categorized and can be

purchased specifically pre-tailored to indicate relevancies such as age, marital status, income, zip code, and even whether or not they own a dog!

### Develop an effective lead generation system.

Minimize time spent searching for clients and maximize time spent showing off your goods to potential buyers. Be it an appointment-setting service (in this field no company gets results like MarketReach, though as CEO and owner perhaps I am a bit biased), or if one decides to go at it alone, holding introductory workshops often makes for new and qualified contacts, where success is eminent assuming one presses the follow-up and extends complementary one-on-one consultations to excited attendees. Utilize the phone effectively- no one knows better than we that this is your most valuable tool in acquiring not only new business, but in maintaining the running network of people with which you have already labored to become acquainted.

### Pay salespeople commission as part of their pay structure.

Exceptional salespeople possess an innate drive and perseverance that deserves special reward and recognition. It may be worth taking the time to personally hunt down members of this fine breed, or to outsource the job to a reputable company who already houses them. This type takes "no" not as a rejection, but as a double-dog dare. Good salespeople do not need it explained to them that they can significantly increase their own revenue by utilizing a built-in commission-based structure with perhaps a partial salary. Exceptional salespeople can earn much more within this structure; only the strident shall accept payment method of this type, while unproductive salespeople earn more within a salaried structure. Keep an eye out for the Exceptional, and leave the

complacent to vie for employment with your competition.

### Don't rest on your Laurels.

Many business owners and salespeople become consumed with the task of client maintenance, perpetually recycling dead-end clients and exhausted opportunities, hoping to spark some life into a corpse, as if they were running a modern-day lab of Frankenstein. A good salesperson knows when to suck it up and get over it, but an exceptional salesperson never has to, because their pipeline is always full. Just remember, most clients can smell success, therefore you must emanate it. Be Exceptional and have faith in it, and soon rather than chasing success, it will follow you.



*Amanda J. Puppo is CEO of the Cranbury, NJ-based firm MarketReach, Inc., a business development group specializing in telephone marketing. Looking for superior appointment setting, survey, database clean-up or training on introductory calling? Maybe you just want more info on some of the information presented here. Email at [amanda@marketreach.biz](mailto:amanda@marketreach.biz) or call at (609) 448-6364.*

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