



The Business Lab, Inc.
 12402 Mile Drive
 Houston TX 77065-1508
 phone (281) 517-0998
 fax (281) 517-0789
www.thebusinesslab.com

From Knowing To Growing

by Kathy Ellis, Business Lab Marketing Coach

One of the best ways to keep your clients is to get to know them a little better. This approach will allow your company to keep more clients, and grow your revenue faster. In this newsletter, you will learn how easy it is to develop a powerful client profile program...a program that will forever change the way you operate and manage your business.

Building Your Client Profile From The Bottom Up: Meet with your sales, marketing, and/or service team and tell them you want to develop a client profile program. As a team, look to create an internal client profile questionnaire, asking each team member to identify which "pieces" of information they want to know about their existing clients. Develop one standardized questionnaire that meets the needs of your clients, your sales/service/marketing team, and your company.

Identifying Your Clients: Review your client list and divide your clients into groups based on the measurement that makes the most sense for your business—i.e., frequency of business; size of the account; potential of the account; etc. Start with the top group and assign these clients to the person already servicing this relationship. Have them go through and complete as much of the questionnaire as possible by reviewing their client files or recording any information they may have accumulated.

Tip From The Business Lab: If your team is not tracking client information in some manner, consider using a contact management program such as ACT! or Goldmine which will help your team capture and organize this vital information.

Developing A Game-Plan: Now you will want to develop a game-plan for meeting with each of the clients in this top group to gather the remainder of the information on your questionnaire. Have each person on your team give you a realistic goal for meeting with each assigned client. Set a time goal for getting to know each client in this top group and "inspect what you expect" by checking in each week to see how these time goals are being met.

Tip From The Business Lab: You don't want your team to merely "interview" their clients. It will take some time and talent to finesse the exercise into a graceful, meaningful information gathering session. Therefore, you may not want your team to start with their top clients first. You may actually choose to have them begin with one-time clients and "practice" on them before moving on to those who they need to make a better impression on.

Using The Information: Once this first group has been contacted, meet back with your team and see what they have learned about their clients. Are there any trends? Has your team developed any ideas for improving client relationships or increasing sales with this group? Can your team find better ways to categorize this top any group further?

Tip From The Business Lab: Use an Internet clipping service such as Inquisit.com to track information on your top clients. You can use this type of service to track company names or subjects (such as innovation AND investing) and either become intimate-

ly familiar with the company or share articles of interest with them.

Keeping In Touch: Now that you have taken the time to learn more about your top clients, find ways for your team to stay in touch with them. As a start, develop specific client appreciation programs based on the information your team has learned. Each month or quarter schedule some fun ideas to "thrill" your clients by using the information you have learned from your client profiles. In addition, involve your team in this client appreciation program because they will have unique insight about ways to make the program a giant success.

Tip From The Business Lab: Consider building your client appreciation programs several months in advance. This makes for better financial budgeting, a more thoroughly developed appreciation plan, and your team will have the time to evaluate several competitive proposals for each month's theme.

Building Appreciation Themes: As you consider the theme for each appreciation program, start by looking at your client profiles as well as specific holidays or seasonal times of the year. For example, if you know your clients are beginning their budget season you could partner with your financial institution and provide an informative seminar on leasing vs. purchasing equipment, or other financial matters that would be relevant. Create a "win-win" for all involved (you will be providing important information, your clients will be receiving important information, the financial institution will have an opportunity to develop a new business relationship). Or send postcards throughout the year to your clients., or send Thanksgiving cards, or Christmas Cards, etc.

Tip From The Business Lab: Your clients will love the appreciation you show them and so will your prospects. If appropriate, include every client and/or prospect in your appreciation program. Take this small step and watch your revenue grow!

Evaluating Your Success: Ask your team to make written notes of any nice comments shared by their clients/prospects. Track the number of clients or prospects that attend your "informational" events. Of course, monitor your client retention percentages and sales numbers, as this is the critical measurement of how well your appreciation program is working.

More Information? If you'd like our FREE Business Ideas & Resources Booklet or would like to see our Client Profile Questionnaire, please fax a note on your letterhead to 281-655-9365 or send an E-mail to bizlab@wt.net and we'll send it to you!

Author's Note: Kathy Ellis is a Marketing Coach and the owner of The Business Lab, a full service marketing and graphic design company. We specialize in relationship marketing programs including database marketing, company brochures, client newsletters and promotional marketing materials for our clients. We share with you our FREE newsletter to showcase powerful marketing tips, techniques and ideas to help you improve your business. The Business Lab is based in Houston, Texas at 281-517-0998 or by e-mail at kathy@thebusinesslab.com