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Steps One Through Three The Nine Steps To A Successful Relationship, Part I

by Kathy Ellis, Business Lab Marketing Coach

It's the time of year when we reflect back on what we have done over the past year and what we want to accomplish in the year ahead. In working with our clients we have come to recognize there are nine steps to building a successful relationship:

1. From unaware to aware: a person sees your direct mail piece, newsletter, business card, advertisement, website; is contacted by your sales team; receives information about you from a friend/colleague or reads a story about your company.
2. From aware to curious: a person is touched/affected by the information in something you or your company might provide.
3. From curious to interested: a person discovers that something you provide may help them.
4. From interested to believing: a person begins to believe that you and your company are real and legitimate.
5. From believing to wanting: a person sees what you are doing/offering and wants to move forward.
6. From wanting to in-motion: a person responds to something you have offered and replies by phone, fax, E-mail, mail...a very BIG step!
7. From in-motion to buyer: a person believes/trusts you and wants the product/service your company provides and begins to pay you.
8. From buyer to satisfied customer: a person becomes a satisfied customer when their trust in you is rewarded.
9. From satisfied customer to advocate: a person receives more/better service/benefits than they expected and it occurs on many occasions...they begin to refer you to others.

Everything you believe and feel and know about your team and your company should be seen in each and every one of these steps. By breaking down each of these steps and comparing them to the activities within your company you can create a more focused approach. In this article we will discuss the first three steps and how you can relate them to your company and your team.

Step 1: From unaware to aware: a person sees your direct mail piece, newsletter, business card, advertisement, website; is contacted by your sales team; receives information about you from a friend/colleague or reads a story about your company.

This is the step where somehow, some way, your customer becomes aware of you and your company. In order for this to occur, your customer must have seen something you provided, heard about you (through friends/vendors/employees/colleagues), or been contacted by you or your team. To break this step down you need to identify "who" is receiving your message, "what" they are receiving, "how" they are receiving it, and if this matches your goals. When reviewing "who" is receiving your message you should start by identifying your prospects (i.e., construction companies with 50 or more employees; all service companies in the 77024 zip code area; etc.). Once you know who you want to target, then the next step will be to identify what needs they have that you and your company can address.

When reviewing "what" they are receiving you should consider things such as: consistency, accuracy, and relevancy. Are your materials consistent? Is your message accurate and does it address the needs of your customer? Do your tools convey the fact that you can address the

needs of your customer? If your tools are inconsistent or do not match the professionalism of your company, then you will confuse your customer and make it very difficult for them to move forward in building a relationship with you.

When reviewing "how" your customers receive your message you should consider things such as: frequency and delivery. How often do your customers receive your message? How do they receive it—mail, telephone, in-person sales visits, seminars etc. From direct mail to TeleForums, each method has a system and if followed properly, these systems will pay off.

Step 2: From aware to curious: a person is touched/affected by the information in something you or your company might provide.

In this step you want your customers to have some type of positive reaction to their new awareness of you and your company. Success with this step comes when your customer re-reads your information, highlights some part of your information, files your information, passes your information on to another, bookmarks your website, etc. Break this step down by asking, "how can we make our customers want to learn more about us?" Here you should identify what your communication should "look/feel" like in order to pique your customers curiosity. Once you have identified this, go back to step one and be certain the "what" and "how" of your communication does portray the look and feel you intend.

Step 3: From curious to interested: a person discovers that something you provide may help them.

When your customers go from curious to interested they are able to take the information you provided and relate it back to themselves and their situation. They may talk about it with others, entertain ideas of how your service might "fit in" with their budget, marketing plan, production plan, etc. They may begin to test your ideas mentally and even begin to notice synchronistic events. To break this step down you should identify all the ways in which your products/services help your customers. Once you have identified this, go back to step one and be certain the "what" and "how" of your communication does let your customers know you can and will help them.

More Information? If you would like to learn more about the nine steps to building a successful relationship with your customers please send an E-mail to ideas@thebusinesslab.com or fax a note on your letterhead to 281-655-9365.

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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