

Developing Strategic Alliances To Enhance Your Marketing Efforts[®]

by Kathy Ellis, The Business Lab Marketing Coach

If you could satisfy ALL the needs of your clients, would that make you and your company more valuable to them? Any time you solve a problem for your client, you strengthen your relationship and set into motion the law of reciprocation. Okay, satisfying ALL your client's needs may be a stretch. However, there are ways to go beyond what you are currently doing for your clients. In this month's article we discuss developing strategic alliances to help you solve your client's problems and enhance your marketing efforts.

Determine The Needs Or Problems Of Your Clients: Think about your clients and how they serve their own clients. Problems can be: situations in need of improvement, a condition in need of a change, an unrealized goal, a project or task, a barrier/limitation/obstacle to be overcome, a constructive purpose, and/or an imbalance/disorder.

Tip From The Business Lab: With your team, list all the problems you feel your clients may be facing. Narrow your list down to only those problems that are relevant to your core business and that you can realistically solve—with a little help from others.

Determine The Partnerships You Can Develop: With the relevant problems of your clients defined, determine the outside products or services you'll need to help solve these problems. Take one problem at a time and make a list of all the vendors you'd need to establish alliances with.

Tip From The Business Lab: With your team, write up an ideal scenario of how you envision the alliance working and the needs of your joint clients addressed. Set-up a group meeting with all the potential vendors, share your vision and agree on how the group can proceed. Most alliances do not have to be complicated as long as all parties understand their part and are willing to make the commitment to the team and to your clients.

Case Study—Real Estate: Sharon Ettinger is a Realtor with Keller Williams Realty. When she decided to leave corporate America and become a Realtor, she knew she would need to differentiate herself from other Realtors and chose to focus on satisfying the needs of her clients as a way to do this. Sharon defined her client's problems: selling their home and/or purchasing the home of their dreams, financing their home, moving into or away from their home, working with a title company, etc. She then made a list of all the vendors who could help her solve these problems and created her unique selling proposition, The EZ-Move Team. This team is made up of mortgage brokers, short-term housing specialists, moving companies, and title companies. She also works with Realtors in other cities to help families

who are moving away from the Houston area. In addition to helping her clients, Sharon also receives many referrals from her EZ-Team alliance.

Case Study—Printing: OPCO Printing is a commercial printing company that works closely with design firms. One of the problems they've uncovered is that designers just out of school have very little knowledge of the printing process. OPCO is working with local service bureaus and paper companies to provide educational seminars for design firms and their new designers. A special invitation is going out to all local design firms and OPCO follows-up each seminar with a Frequently Answered Questions post card each month. These invitations and post cards are a wonderful way of sharing with their clients how they are solving client problems and helps to keep the OPCO name in front of these design firms.

Tip From The Business Lab: In addition to partnering with others to help solve problems for your mutual clients, you can also establish alliance partnerships to help one another stay in touch with your mutual clients/prospects. For example, a law firm could partner with an accounting firm to send out an informational piece with select advice for corporations within their target market. A builder could partner with an architect to send out an informational piece regarding the latest technology and design ideas. Expanding your sphere of influence will enhance the perception your clients/prospects have about your credibility and expertise. Additionally, creating a partnership to share in your marketing efforts can lead to improved quality and increased frequency, which in turn will lead to more business and stronger relationships.

More Information? If you would like to learn more about this important topic or would like to receive our FREE Service Ideas Booklet, please send an E-mail to kathy@thebusinesslab.com, visit our website at www.thebusinesslab.com, or fax a note on your letterhead to 281-517-0789.

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