

Staying Top Of Mind ©

By Kathy Ellis, The Business Lab Marketing Coach

Staying in touch with key prospects and clients is an excellent strategy. In fact, we will go so far as to say this strategy will help ensure continued and consistent business flowing into your company. As effective and important as this strategy is, it is often overlooked, undervalued, and executed poorly. However, by understanding all that is involved in executing this strategy and making the commitment necessary, staying top of mind with your prospects and clients will live up to its promise. In this month's article we will discuss the development of an awareness strategy and offer tips for staying in touch.

Who Will You Stay In Touch With? With your team, determine who your audience will be. Start with a list of current and past clients then add in your key prospects.

Tip From The Business Lab: If you don't have a list of key prospects, develop a checklist that you and your team can use to create the list. Model your best clients when developing your list. You can use the following "qualifiers" to help: SIC Codes (match those of your most profitable clients), zip codes (if geographical considerations are important), sales volume or number of employees, membership in key organizations, customers of a key manufacturer/service, etc. Have a plan for obtaining this list and include the costs associated (manpower to research or create list, dollars needed to purchase list, etc.)

How Will You Stay In Touch And How Often? It is important to determine the number of clients and prospects you can realistically stay in touch with. This number will help determine the format and how often you will stay in touch. If you have a very small list, you can plan more personal and more elaborate encounters. The larger your list, the wider your reach will need to be.

With your team, determine the best format for staying in touch and how often you'd like to stay in touch. There are numerous of ideas to choose from. Write them all down then together determine the most effective and realistic methods for your audience.

Tip From The Business Lab: When determining how and how often you will stay in touch, keep in mind the resources you will need to accomplish your goal. For the ideas you outlined above, write down the resource and/or cost components of each (administrative support, sales follow-up/support, writing/design/printing/postage, etc.). Once you've narrowed your list down to the top ideas, research the costs associated and develop a realistic budget.

What Will You Say? Once you've determined the format and the frequency, what will you share with your audience? With your team, list the topics that will have the most interest to your audience. Start by listing the following: Accomplishments you are the most proud of; common objections in the sales cycle; common questions of key clients; problems/needs clients have; etc.

Tip From The Business Lab: Base the "depth" of the information you will share with your clients and prospects on the format and frequency you've already defined. For example, if you have a list of 5000 clients and prospects and have determined that you will stay in touch via a monthly postcard, you will need to create an "editorial" calendar and

determine what message to share each month and how to effectively get your message across in the small space of a postcard.

How Will You Produce Your Message? Now that you know what you will send, how often you will send it and what it will say, the last step is making it happen. Since you've already identified the resource and cost components involved, you and your team can create a calendar and action steps to ensure a smooth execution of strategy.

Tip From The Business Lab: Assign deadlines and accountability for each action step defined above. Include your Top Of Mind Program in your meetings with employees and "inspect what you expect" by asking for updates and results.

Commitment To Staying In Touch. By allocating the proper resources to realistically follow through on a Top Of Mind Program, you will be making the commitment necessary for successful results. If you answered all the questions above but are not able to successfully execute your strategy, then you might re-visit your assumptions. One of the most challenging aspects of successfully executing a Top Of Mind strategy is making room for it in your organization. Unless it is a priority and is someone's responsibility to see it through, then it can fall by the wayside and never realize it's potential.

Tips From The Business Lab: As you create your Top Of Mind Program, here are a few marketing, branding and identity issues to keep in mind:

- Part of the family — double-check to be sure the look and feel of your message matches your existing identity. Even if you are introducing a new idea or program, you will want it to be recognized as part of your company; part of the family.
- People do read the copy, even it's only the headlines — keep your information relevant, well written and professional.
- Share the program with your whole company, especially your receptionist — let everyone within your company know about the program: what it looks like, when it goes out, how to respond, etc.
- Track your results — ask your sales team to follow-up with clients and prospects and find out how they like the program. When new calls come in, learn how they heard about you.

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 Web site at www.thebusinesslab.com, or fax a note on your letterhead to 281-517-0789.

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