

## Influencing Spheres Of Influence ©

By Kathy Ellis, The Business Lab Marketing Coach

If you ever stop to study how people decide “what to do next,” you might notice that the rather simple strategy of paying attention to one’s neighbor is used quite often. Fascinating, that even in this information-on-demand age, we still go back to the basics and see how and what our neighbors are doing. It may not be that we want to keep up with the Joneses so much as to allow the Joneses to assist us in making decisions they have already made. It is the phenomenon of local information leading to global wisdom. As marketers we can use this “checking out your neighbor” strategy to our advantage. These neighbors represent your clients’ and prospects’ spheres of influence. Implementing a strategy to affect these spheres of influence will get you across the welcome mat and into the homes of your clients/prospects. In this month’s article we share some ideas on how to impact spheres of influence.

**Defining the Sphere:** Think about the day-to-day lives of your clients (especially those you have defined as your ideal client/prospect — those 20% who represent 80% of your business) or top prospects. Where do they live? How do they live? With whom do they socialize? What type of car do they drive? What paper/books/magazines do they read? To which associations do they belong? To what radio stations do they listen? What “neighbors” do they watch for ideas on how to grow their own businesses? All of these various elements are spheres of influence for your clients/prospects.

*Tip from The Business Lab:* With your team, make a list of all of the questions that will help you define your clients/prospects and their spheres of influence. Assign team members to obtain this Client Intelligence and set a deadline for the mission’s completion.

As a side benefit from this exercise, your team will be able to describe clearly and specifically their ideal prospect — i.e., “She is in her mid-to-late forties, her clothes are from the Juliana Collezione, she drives a red BMW M5, is a past member of the Young Entrepreneurs’ Organization and current member of the World Entrepreneurs’ Organization, she is a member of the Texas-Exes and is a committee member of The American Heart Association, she keeps up-to-date on current events in her industry by reading three select professional journals as well as the *HBJ*, *WSJ*, *Houston Chronicle*, and *The New York Times*, etc.” Getting this specific does not limit you in any way. In fact, it actually helps by keeping you focused on who your ideal client is and helps your own sphere of influence help you (i.e., your team or supporters can quickly review their own mental rolodex and identify prospects that are similar to the ideal).

**Influencing Their Spheres:** From the exercise above you have determined the spheres of influence for your clients/prospects. The next step is to create a strategy for making a distinct mark on these spheres of influence. Some of these areas are more easily identified and impacted than others, so start with the items on which you and your team can make an immediate and visible influence.

The goal is to touch as many areas of your clients’/prospects’ influence as possible, via publications, the Internet, professional organizations, media, and so on. This way, when the time comes for your ideal prospect to turn to these already-trusted areas for help and recommendations, your name will be top-of-mind. An endorsement from this group will almost guarantee your success — whether it be selling your services to new prospects or solidifying your relationship with your existing clients.

*Tip from The Business Lab:* With your team, create a Client Intelligence Matrix. On the left side of the matrix place the questions in order from most to least tangible in nature. Along the top of the matrix list the names of the clients/prospects for whom you have obtained this information. List those names in order from most ideal client/prospect to least. Fill in the information for the most important clients/prospects.

Check to see what patterns or connections you can find. Start with these items as you will be able to gain more leverage from the cross-over. Write down specific steps regarding how you can influence these key areas. Assign action items to your team and a deadline on when all steps should be completed. Monitor your progress and update the steps as needed. Consider updating your matrix each quarter/year to track trends and make adjustments when necessary.

*Example from The Business Lab:* Suppose your matrix shows that five of your top ten clients read certain industry publications. One of the action items you can take here is to write monthly articles and submit them to these and other industry publications. The articles should be relevant to your client’s business (not yours) and should showcase your expertise in these areas. Many trade publication will print your articles if they are professional, non self serving, and beneficial to their readers. The key is to submit your articles consistently each month to these publications. As you begin to establish your credibility with the editors, they will publish more and more of your articles. Use the services of an outside copywriter/editor or PR firm to ensure consistency and frequency in your writing. Use the same articles to distribute to your clients (either in print or via E-mail) and as reference information on your web site. You could also arrange to have the editors of these publications speak to professional associations in which your client/prospects participate. From this action item, you have become an integral part of a sphere of influence that motivates your clients/prospects to build their business.

*Tip from The Business Lab:* Find ways to live, breathe, work, and play within the spheres of influence you have identified to be the most important for your clients/prospects. This will go a long way toward obtaining endorsements from the “neighbors or neighborhoods” that influence your clients and prospects.

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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 creativity and helping you think outside the box. We then help you implement those creative ideas through programs including database marketing, web sites, interactive CD brochures, company brochures, client newsletters and promotional marketing materials. We share our FREE newsletter with you to showcase powerful marketing tips, techniques, and ideas to help you improve your business. The Business Lab is based in Houston, TX, at 281-374-0170 or by E-mail at [kathy@thebusinesslab.com](mailto:kathy@thebusinesslab.com)