



If You Own The Business, You're In Sales!

No matter what kind of business you own and/or operate, you must consider sales to be your primary responsibility.

Delegation of responsibility is fine—someone else can be the Director of New Business Development—but you must never forget that ultimately, you are responsible.

Because you are responsible, you must make the final decisions regarding product, pricing, and promotion—how your offerings are to be presented to the public.

After all, isn't this why you went into business for yourself—to be captain of your own ship?

In our business, we don't "make" anything—our work product is either a personal or a business tax return, or it's a series of financial reports, or maybe it's just answering business questions.

So we don't have to spend money to buy something to resell, such as forklifts or lampshades.

Tell you what we do spend money on, though: we spend thousands on Professional Development. Our tax world is continually changing, and we invest heavily in time and money to stay current and to broaden our professional competence.

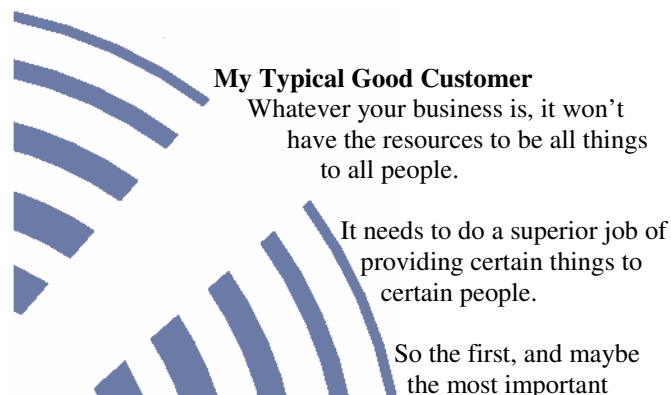
But of all the training we do, you could make a very good argument that the most important training every year is sales training.

Think about it: if we don't sell, it won't matter how good or knowledgeable we are.

After having worked with many businesses down through the years, I'd say that the two most common sources of business failures are:

- No formal sales program
- No formal control system.

So let's talk about that sales program. It doesn't have to be real elaborate, but it must be specific, and it must answer certain questions.



question to ask is, "Who are these people? What characteristics describe My Typical Good Customer (TGC)?"

It's taken me years to learn to keep asking myself this question. It's probably the most important single question a business owner can ask.

If you can identify the people you should be in front of, doesn't it also follow that you know something about the people you should not be in front of?

If true, we should be able to increase the number of hits and decrease the number of misses, just by more accurate selection of our prospects.

This principle is true whether the business is a storefront or whether it is a service business. And only the owner should be making these decisions—they are just too important to be delegated.

A True Story

I have just been informed that a three-year business is closing its doors, and I'm convinced that the closer is completely related to the lack of a formal marketing function.

I have known the owners for at least three years, and know them to be both professionally capable and to be people of integrity.

Their business depends on a part of our area economy that is no longer robust but nevertheless still has opportunity.

But their business model was built around serving the needs of a small number of very similar clients. When these clients cut back, my friends had no marketing resources to fall back on.

My Typical Good Customer, Level Two

So the Typical Good Customer has another layer. One presumes that my friends had sufficiently answered the Level One question, but then the market changed on them.

The change evidently was sudden, and ferocious in its effect.

The Level Two question assumes some fundamental change in market conditions that require changes in your marketing approach.

The ability to change quickly is what we small micro-businesses are all about. It's our huge competitive advantage, and one that the bigger competitors cannot hope to match.

My friends need a new, or at least a second, Typical Good Customer.

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Maybe their marketplace will change back so they can continue to serve their first TGC.

But maybe the marketplace won't change. And if the marketplace doesn't change, or continues to evolve to something new, that first TGC won't be of much help.

So it all comes down to this: to stay ahead of the game, keep working on that TGC concept. Keep sharpening the definitions.

And keeping looking for new definitions of your TGC.

Within three years, your first TGC definitions will almost certainly change.

And change is your opportunity!