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enLIGHTenment
MAGAZINE
JUNE 2018



Sometimes “New” Isn’t Always Better

Remember those sales and marketing techniques abandoned years ago because you thought they were “old?” It’s time to resurrect and fine-tune them for today’s market. BY MARK OKUN

Growing up in my family’s furniture store, I started interacting with customers at eight years old. By age 12, I was selling every Saturday to customers who were two, three, and even four times older than me. One of the lessons I remember to this day is that for people – no matter their age or station in life – things stay pretty much the same, kinda.

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“Content builds relationships. Relationships are built on trust. Trust drives revenue.”

—Andrew Davis

It is said that history repeats itself. The plaid jacket that was all the rage in the 1970s looks dated now, but take the same geometric pattern of plaid, jazz up the colors, and you suddenly have the fashionable hipster plaid known as tartan.

The same applies to sales and marketing. Most of the old methods, when used in 2018, seem tired and worn — even comical. Clients have changed, just like advertising has, and so has the way we sell to clients. This means we must also change with the times. I believe with a few tweaks, these past techniques can once again have life and become successful tools.

THE OLD PLAYBOOK

In the old days, we were told to qualify the customer and always be closing. In my opinion, both of these bedrock methods of client connection need a revamp, because as originally used, they are pretty terrible.

In 2018, the sales realities have flipped qualification to the client, who does it all online. Before

we meet them or know who they are, clients will qualify the items they want to buy, qualify the place they will make their purchase (online or brick & mortar); and may even qualify the person they want to work with.

This power swap indicates that in order to qualify as the client’s first choice as a lighting resource, we can no longer wait for them to enter our showrooms. If we wait for the door to open to begin the qualification process, there will be a continued reduction in traffic and sales.

Clients may not know why service is necessary, be it in design or product knowledge — and that it is as relevant or more important than the product alone. Sadly, the client will usually discover this after they make a purchase that is not what they expected or wanted.

Therefore we must broadcast to our base in advance of their buying cycle, why they need to work with a professional in a showroom and that the expert they need is us.

DIRECT MAIL, FLYERS & THE YELLOW PAGES

When evaluating the marketing process, it is critical to stop wasting money. Curtail the use of bulk direct mail, flyers, and the Yellow Pages. Each of those marketing methods was highly successful in their day, but they have lost their effectiveness. With some modifications, we can make such useless tools useful again.

When sending snail mail, make sure it’s in letter or greeting card form and that the envelope, as well as its contents, do not broadcast “Marketing Material Enclosed.” To get positive results, use oversized pieces in colors that impact the senses and that stand out from the typical items found in their mailbox.

Include something of value to begin building the foundational influence of reciprocity. Curiosity is a trigger and will get attention. Do not tell the client what their “gift” is, show 3 to 5 items, each with its own landing page triggered by a QR code included on the card that the client scans to see what they have received from you. To claim the “gift,” they must come to the showroom.

This method has several benefits: We get the client’s attention without being salesy; excitement is created by the opportunity to get a gift, and one of them is a biggie. This method will create positive word-of-mouth communication as people talk about your showroom.



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The real benefit to using social media is in creating a connection with people and having a conversation.

YOU'RE NOT MONTY PYTHON

Drop the SPAM. When email was new, we loved to open every one that was sent to us. Today we have overloaded SPAM folders and exclusive buttons that swiftly designate an important, yet ill-conceived piece of marketing material, to the trash while rendering the sender to the eternal position of junk provider. Another short-lived digital marketing method is the banner ad; the click-through rate is so negligible, it's not worth the investment in time or money. After all, how many banner ads do you see and then click on in a month?

GET SOCIAL

Stop - or at least profoundly limit - automatic or scheduled posting. This impersonal method of getting work done has a limited place in any successful digital marketing effort. You can't build a relationship on any of the digital platforms without engagement, and these types of posts are the least-engaging.

The real benefit to using social media is in creating a connection with people and having a conversation. People swipe by businesses that only post salesy ads or talk about how good they

are. Using social media effectively is about the rapport and relationships that can be built with current and future customers. The goal is TOMA (Top Of the Mind Awareness). When the need for a product arises, or when a recommendation is asked for, the positive drip, drip, drip of educational, humorous, and professional content will drive you to the top.

OUTDATED SALES METHODS

Back in the dark days of selling, when the client had limited choices, the playbook demanded that the sales force be aggressive and strong-willed to get the customer to buy. From the famous play/movie Glengary Glenn Ross, we learned the acronym "ABC, Always Be Closing."

While closing is still a skill we use, how we employ it has changed. Closing the customer morphs from being an action being done to a person, to the natural result of a mutually beneficial process that educates the client.

If you have been a student of Sales, you have heard many types of closes that have been used. As the client has become empowered through the life enhancements of digital changes, there are



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several we need to drop. One of them is the assumptive close. This was used at every point in a presentation. No matter where the customer was in the sales process, we assume they are buying now. Today this same technique is considered blatantly insulting and transparent.

The change needed to make this closing method desirable once again is to flip it. From the start of our interaction, we must still assume the client is going to buy the item, just not from us. There are too many outlets of the product alone to take that for granted. What they can't get anywhere, but in a showroom is knowledge.

The new concept to assume is that the client is under-educated on the products they want and it is our job to teach them. When providing specific product knowledge that the client may or may not know, close with an assumptive question: "Were you aware of that detail?"

If they respond "Yes," follow up with, "Why is that important to you?" The client begins to tell you every reason why they want this item. Now you no longer have to assume the client's reasons to buy and can focus in on why they need to buy from you.

THE WAYBACK MACHINE

Way back in 1977 I read my first sales book by Joe Girard titled *How to Sell Anything to Anybody*. Joe is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as "The world's greatest salesman."

Years later this book, along with several others, became part of the required reading list during the standard three-week sales training program I pioneered.

Girard, referred to his "Rolodex" (a prehistoric version of Outlook) as a Ferris wheel and each card was a seat for his clients. Today, with a host of digital resources at our fingertips for CRM, staying in touch with clients is easy, and the seats we have and the notes we can make are unlimited.

As an example of using the Ferris wheel method, early last fall a client received their merchandise from me and mentioned they would like to do landscape lighting. A note was made and put into the calendar with an alarm. The alarm came up on March 31; we still had snow with more predicted. I reset the date to April 6, and on that day a quick call was made to the client to see how they made out through the winter and to see if they wanted to get ahead of the rush and complete their landscape lighting design we had touched on last fall. The response from the customer went like this: "Thanks for calling, are you psychic? We were just talking about our gardens, when can you come out?" By the time you read this article the job has been designed and installed.

NOSTALGIA

We may become sentimental for the processes of the past, but like Yellow Page ads, we will leave them behind and never see them be useful or have the power they once did. The information that was provided in that distinct book is now at the touch of your finger or within the sound of your voice. Have you thought of a voice strategy yet? It's coming!

If you have an old-school method you love and hate to part with, tell me about it, and we can try to adapt it to the clients you're working with today.

And, as always, Happy Selling!



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