

How much do you love sales? If I guessed "not much", I think I would be right for most of you. Picking up the phone to make cold calls sends shivers down the spine of most people. Small business owners are no exception and are notoriously reluctant salespeople. This is a dangerous set of circumstances, since 'business owner' = 'salesperson' in many small businesses, so the health of the business is at stake.

Passion is something that small businesses do better than any other business sector: for responsive service, great products and a genuine interest in their clients. The irony is that this passion is blocked by poor sales efforts and so potential clients just don't know who you are.

As boss-of-everything in your business, sales have to be fast, efficient and effective. A useful way to quickly determine whether a particular sales activity is going to give you the best bang-for-your-buck is to assess its Return on Sales Effort. This is the likely return you get for the amount of effort. A high return is the aim, which will give you the most sales for the least effort. Measuring your likely return before you decide what sales actions to take will help you get more from your time and maybe avoid a hard slog. Undoubtedly there will be business sitting on your desk that do probably don't see.

There are lots of easy ways that you can maximise your Return on Sales Effort, that also make sales a lot less daunting. Here goes:

Measure everything that you possibly can about the way your clients buy from you. You should know (at a minimum): average sales, numbers of clients, how long your clients stay with you and how often they buy from you

Having regular ongoing business from your clients is the best type of business. Where possible, move one-off clients into some kind of regular buying pattern or even ongoing contracts that have regular income. This could be maintenance programs, memberships or subscriptions, etc.

Find ways to get your clients to buy from you more often, such as a Loyalty Program, regular promotions, events or sales.

Analyse what your clients are currently buying and what other products and services that your current clients could buy.

Create packages and bundles of products or services, so you can sell more in each transaction.

Take the time to really get to know your clients. You will find new opportunities, keep your clients longer and get more referrals.

Your team can all be salespeople. Train, support, empower and incentivise them to sell in their everyday work.

Trick yourself to sell without selling

Written by Warren Harmer

Build a strong network of allied businesses that sell for you.

Create raving fans in your client base. Exceed their expectations every time.

Research prospects thoroughly so that when you do communicate you have impact and insight into their needs.

Ask your current clients for referrals.

When you are in the sales process, act with honesty and genuine interest – ‘salesy’ attitudes can be spotted from a mile.

Develop a sales process that you can easily follow and refine over time. Build sales templates, processes, tools, product presentations and samples to make the process easier.

Listen (a lot) before you say anything.

Measure your sales activities so you know what actually works.

Build a community around your clients so you can promote directly to them, especially through social media and regular communications.

Pick sales activities that you find fun, then you will be much more likely to do them and to persist when you get rejected.

Communicate in person or verbally as much as possible during the sales process.

Get regular feedback so you can respond better to your clients needs and save disgruntled clients.

See unhappy clients as an opportunity to create disciples.



Dr Warren Harmer