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The Successful Print Sales Circle

Worksheet 7: Contact key customers

Step 1: Set up your calls

Firstly, create a list of your top ten customers. Include any that have the potential to be in your top ten as well.

Take some time to consider what makes a top ten customer. Traditionally, this is measured by revenue. However, you may also wish to consider profit and also the ease of dealing with the customer.

This exercise works best if you can speak or Zoom with your customers. Here is an e-mail script to ask a top customer for a call like this:

Dear[FNAME]

Do you have time for a five-minute phone call or Zoom call in the next few days? There's a question I'd like to ask you. It would really help me if you could spare the time. And I promise there is no selling involved!

Would you be free at [TIME]? If this doesn't work for you, please let me know a couple of alternative times that would suit you.

Thank you so much!

Write down the answers to these questions

What makes a top ten customer for you?

Who are your top ten customers?

Step 2: Have the call

Now it is time to have the call. These are your most important customers so you should already be comfortable talking to them.

Here is the structure of the start of the call:

- Greet customer
- Check that this is still a good time to speak
- Thank them for agreeing to speak with you
- Tell them that you are looking at ways of developing your company
- To help with this, you would like to ask them one question

Here's the question:

"Let's say we changed our business simply to serve customer name. What would we look like?"

You may also wish to add the following:

"There are no restrictions. You can be as creative as you like!"

This ensures that they do not feel that they have to restrict themselves to your current products and services.

Step 3: Probe

Your customer may not be used to being asked to think in this way. So you might have to encourage to think beyond faster quotes or different way of communicating with your customer services team. Ask them what products or services would help make their business better. Or ask them what challenges they are facing and see if you can come up with an offering to help them overcome this challenge.

Once the customer gives you something concrete to work with you will usually receive two types of answer. The first can happen more often than you think. The customer will ask for something that you already provide but that they didn't know you offered! That's great news: you have a ready-made sales opportunity. The second option is where your customer wants something that you do not yet provide. We will cover how to deal with this shortly.

Sometimes your customer may not answer very completely. Or you may be unsure about what they mean. Here is a list of useful phrases that will encourage the customer to talk more:

What do you mean by ...
And what does that lead to…
How would you define...

Tell me more about that..
What has been your experience ...

Step 4: Repeat the client's answer

It is very important that you repeat what your customer has said to you. It is important to make sure that you heard them correctly and that you understood what they were asking for. Often, at this stage, the customer will correct you about what they really wanted.

Once the customer has confirmed that you have understood correctly what they want, qualify the business opportunity here. If you already offer what they want it is not an issue. However, if this is a new product or service, you do not want to commit to a lot of work for little return. Ask the customer if you offered the service or product that they asked for and if they chose to work with you what this might look like in revenue terms.

Once you have completed this stage, it is time to move to the end of the call. There are two parts to the end:

- Thank the customer for their help
- Tell the customer what you will do next

Here are two scripts to end the conversation. The first one is for when you already offer what the customer has asked for:

FNAME, thank you so much for your time. This has been a really useful conversation for me. I will be in touch shortly to set a time when we can talk about the [SERVICE/PRODUCT THEY ASKED FOR].

Naturally, you can also set a time during the conversation. The second script is for when the customer has asked for something that you do not already offer:

FNAME, thank you so much for your time. This has been a really useful conversation for me. I will be in touch shortly when I have had a chance to consider if and how we might offer [SERVICE/PRODUCT THEY ASKED FOR].

Step 5: Take action

If you receive a worthwhile business opportunity, it is important to put it into action. For existing services, it is easy to make sure that you set up a further conversation to try and win this business.

This is a slightly longer process for new products and services. The first step is to consider if this opportunity is right for you. Beware deciding too quickly that it is not for you. It is very tempting to decide that a new product or service is outside the scope of your business. But if a key client has a demand for it, it is likely that other clients like them will have a similar demand. Often we reject things too quickly because they are outside our comfort zone.

It may be easier to offer a new service than you think. Here are three ways to offer a product or service that you don't currently fulfil in-house:

Outsource

You may well be able to find someone to whom you can subcontract this work. Do check within your network: you will usually find someone who can recommend a contact who can provide what you need.

Partner

You may want to take things one step further. Consider setting up a formal agreement on a longer-term basis with another company who provides what you need. Ideally you will promote and sell each others' services. You should test a new contact on a couple of jobs first. A partnership like this can improve revenues for both companies and mean that you have greater security of supply.

Invest

Finally, you may decide to offer new products or services that are created in house. If you decide to go down this route, make sure that there is the offer of sufficient work to make this worthwhile. If you are looking at producing new printed items, the introduction should be fairly seamless. However, if you are looking at creating an entirely new offering, such as website design for instance, be aware that you will need to change your company culture. You will have to embrace new ways of working and recruit staff with very different types of experience and skills from those you are used to. It may be easier to begin by partnering and to learn from this.

Step 6: Make contact with your customer again

Once you have decided how you are going to progress, it is time to let your customer know what you are going to do. Send them a sales plan or an implementation plan. Be open with them. Let them know you plan to launch a new product or service or that you will do so if you can reach a suitable commercial agreement with them. Also, be honest if you plan to partner or outsource the work: you do not want to mislead your best customers.

Step 7: Create a wider launch

Think about which clients and prospects you have that are similar to the customer you just spoke to. There is a good chance that they may be interested in the same products and services that your customer was. Go through your prospect and client list and work out who else you might approach with your new offering. Remember, even if your customer asked for something you already offer, it is still worth carrying out this exercise: similar customers may also not be aware of what you offer.

List potential extra prospects here

Next, create a simple sales letter: specify the type of client you are working with, the challenge that they face, how your product/service solves it and why they should choose from you. We will cover creating sales letters later on in the programme. If you need help right now you may find the following resources helpful:

https://profitableprintrelationships.com/online-training-resources/how-to-stop-print-buyers-choosing-on-price/

https://profitableprintrelationships.com/online-training-resources/done-for-you-sales-scripts/

Write down the type of client you are working with

Write down the business challenge that they are likely to be facing

Write down how you solve this challenge

Write down why they should choose you to provide this product/service

Finally, send out your sales letter. Follow up the letter with a personal e-mail or call.

Step 8: Share your success!

This is not an exercise that you can turn into a regular activity: you only have a few key clients. Again, make sure you fill in the table below at the end of the worksheet. You may prefer to make a copy of it or create a spreadsheet. Again, I urge you to complete the spreadsheet: it is your way to check that you are on track with this exercise and are taking action.

For this task, your goal is to contact 10 key clients. You should expect to have five of these customers agree to have a call with you. Your aim is to end up with two actionable suggestions.

How did you find this exercise? Please share your results with us at circle@ProfitablePrintRelationships.com If you come across any challenges you will be able to raise them on the monthly group call. If you are a gold member you can ask any questions privately on your exclusive e-mail address.

	Customer name	Call made	Idea	Action taken
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				