

# PROFITABLE PRINT RELATIONSHIPS

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## The Successful Print Sales Circle

### Video 11: Communication Channels

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Hello, and welcome to month six in our journey together in The Successful Print Sales Circle. And today's task is all about communication. When I run sales workshops, I often ask attendees how many channels they use to communicate on a one-to-one basis with prospects and customers. And typically, they'll come up with two to three. The highfliers may go up as far as five. But most people are using phone, email, and perhaps meetings, and that's it. And these days, that's not enough. Are you using text messages or SMS? Because if not, you should be. Are you using social media messaging, direct messaging? Because if not, you should be. And are you using that underused communication channel, direct mail? Because if not, you should be.

You're going to find a list of 10 different ways that you could be communicating with your clients in the worksheet today. And it's really important that you try and adopt some of these and mix it up when you communicate with your clients. People who are reaching out and using new and different channels, expanding their use of channels, using multi-channel communication with their customers, they're the ones who are having the most success building prospect and customer relationships. They're the ones who have the best possible chance of controlling a conversation and a dialogue and achieving the results that they want from it.

People who are sticking to phone, email, and the odd meeting, they're struggling to achieve those same results because their prospects, their customers, they don't want to speak to that salesperson. They're so used to receiving communication in those channels that they're blocking it, both mentally and they're working out strategies to make sure that they avoid having to communicate on those channels. How many times do you pick up the phone and it goes to voicemail and that voicemail never gets answered? That's happening all the time now. How many times do you think that your emails may be being just put straight in the trash can? That's why it's so important that we look at new ways to reach out to people.

There's two reasons why we should be doing this. The first of these is that we want to mirror our prospects' and our customers' behaviors. So one of the most important things that we can do is make sure that we make them feel comfortable. If they want to communicate in a particular channel, we should communicate with them in that channel, even if it's not our preferred channel. So if someone likes communicating through LinkedIn direct messaging rather than email, that's where we should do it.

The other reason for doing this is completely the opposite. It's called pattern interrupt. So sometimes we have clients that are really hard to get hold of. What can we do to get through to them? They're used to the fact that we always phone them every Wednesday morning, or that they get an email from us every Thursday afternoon, so they ignore it. But imagine the phone goes off in your pocket and it's a text, maybe it's from your wife, and you pull it out. And actually, it's from that sales person. Chances are they'll deal with it there and then. They won't ignore it. For a good number of years, I've found that communicating by text got me excellent results. But, of course, more people are getting used to it now, so I'm having to mix it up again and find new channels instead.

Now, these two reasons for mixing up our communication channels may seem very opposite, but we use those two reasons in different situations. So if you're beginning to communicate with a new prospect, you might well ask them, "What's the best way to communicate with you? How do you like receiving your communication from me?" And they may ask you to text, they may ask you to carry on on Twitter. They may say, "Actually, I'd just like an email, thank you." But it's good to be in their comfort zone, to communicate in the way that they want you to.

On the other hand, we may have some people we've been speaking to, and maybe they've gone a bit quiet on us and we want to wake them up. That's when we need pattern interrupt. That's when we're going to use a different channel that they're not expecting to shake them out of the fact that they're just so used to communication in certain ways. And we may also mix that up with a rather different message as well. So those are the two ways in which we can mix up channels and get these much more effective results.

Let's go through the process of how you're going to get there. Right, stage one is to make a list of all the potential channels that you could use. And I've helped you with this on the worksheet. I've given you a list of all the ways that I communicate with clients. So have a look down there and then write down the ones that you're able to use, that you'd be happy using, that you're going to learn, and see if there's any that you can add to the list. And if you can, let me know. I'd love to hear them.

Stage two. I want you to make a list of 10 prospects that you have at the moment that you'd love to do business with. And some of them, you may be having an okay conversation with. Some of them, they may have gone rather quieter than you'd have liked. So don't pick the ones where you're having a really effective conversation already, and they're returning however you're communicating with them at the moment. Pick the ones that have gone a little quieter. And what I'd like you to do is, first of all, against each of those names, is just put down the ways in which you have been communicating with them. And then I'd like you to write down a channel that you'll use to mix things up.

Now, don't just pick one at random off the list that you made in stage one. I want you to do a little research with this. See if you can track them down on social media. Are you finding that they're really active on LinkedIn or on Facebook? See if you can send them a message going, "Look, we haven't spoken much recently. Is there a way you prefer to speak to me? Can we mix it up?" And sometimes, it's going to be hard and you're just going to have to guess and put down a new channel. But make a list of those 10 names, how you're communicating with them at the moment, and then add at least one new way that you're going to try communicating with them.

And stage three is to communicate through your new channel. Now, at this stage, you're not going to change your message particularly. You're just going to carry on the way you have, but hopefully get a result because you're changing the way in which you're trying to contact them. Now, sometimes that's not quite enough. So I've also included a script that you can use if you really want to try and push things forward a little bit. It's a little bit pushy. It shouldn't offend the prospect at all, but it just keeps them focused and makes sure that they're really going to answer you with the best way to take things forward. So you may find that script useful if people have been ignoring you a little bit.

So that covers the prospects that you're talking to at the moment, but we're going to take things further now. We're going to look at prospects that maybe you've given up on, prospects that you might even class as dead prospects. And that's what we're going to come to in stage four. So in stage four, I'd like you to list five prospects that you've given up on. And again, use the same process that you did in step two and write down their name, write down the ways in which you've been communicating with them. Try and do a bit of research and pick a new channel that you're going to pattern interrupt them with.

But we're going to take it further with your dead prospects. So in stage five, we are going to create a pattern interrupt a message. So I want you to change things, give them a message they're not expecting at this point. They've been used to getting your standard sales approaches. Maybe they've had those over the past few months and they're just going in one ear and out the other. So now it's time to change that message, shock them a little bit.

Now, if you're not sure about what to do, I've included a script here for a pattern interrupt message which I've found really useful. Some people find it a little scary because actually I'm asking them whether they actually want me to contact them again or not. And some people feel this is too blunt, that you risk losing the prospect. But to be honest, if they're not interested in talking to you at this stage, you've got nothing to lose. And what's always surprised me when I've used this script is the number of people who come back and then resume conversations because they don't want to lose contact with you, they've just been a bit busy, and the dialogue resumes. So do try it out.

In stage six, I want you to make contact with these five dead prospects. Use your pattern interrupt messages and see what comes from it. And I'm hoping that you're going to be pleasantly surprised by what happens at this point. Stage seven, it's share your success time. So for this task, I'd like you to contact 10 current prospects in the way that I described in stages two and three, and use a new channel and see what happens. You're aiming to have a meaningful dialogue with at least two of them on a new channel. So the aim of this is to give that conversation that you've been having with them, give that dialogue new life. That's the aim.

I'd also like you to contact those five dead prospects and use the pattern interrupt message. And again, I'm hoping that you'll resume contact with at least two of them. Now, that's actually a success rate that's double for your current prospects, but the pattern interrupt message can make a real difference. So I'm going to wish you success with that. There's a table at the end of the worksheet so that you can write down your clients, you can mark down your success and make sure that it's happening.

But most importantly, I want you to use this task to get comfortable with trying out some new communication methods. They may not always work for you. You may decide that, for instance, video conferencing and using Zoom or Teams or Google Hangouts just isn't for you. If so, fair enough. But try some things out. See what you can do to add to your armory of ways of communicating with prospects and customers, and make it part of your sales habits and your sales rituals. Because I'm hoping that you'll do this on a regular basis, that you won't stick to those three or four ways of communicating with people that have been in your comfort zone, that you'll move out of this and get better results because you've moved out of your comfort zone.

And you know what will happen? Those new channels that you're trying out, they'll be in your comfort zone before too long. I now have no issues communicating with social media direct messaging, or using video to communicate with. Some of those things were quite strange to me when I first tried them out. But now they're second nature, and that can be the same for you. So I wish you every success with this task. Please share the results with me. I'll be keeping Gold members accountable, as always.

Next week, we have a podcast. We're going to talk about e-commerce, because this is such an important new area. There are such great opportunities for printers of all types. And as ever, I'm going to give you some new ideas and maybe some things that you hadn't thought of before. Then in two weeks' time, you receive the next task. And we're going to focus on extra charges, because so much of the time with our current customers we lose profit because we give away too much to them. And we're still, a lot of the time, they don't even appreciate what we're giving them. So we're going to focus on trying to make those customers more efficient to reduce extra charges, and introducing charges where appropriate. So I look forward to seeing you on that task.