

THE EDGE OF SUCCESS

9 Proven Strategies to Grow a Small Business

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Infusionsoft®

Despite investing blood, sweat, and tears in their ventures, many entrepreneurs find success just beyond their reach.

They are poised on the cusp of greatness – on the edge of success.

All they need is a nudge in the right direction. This book is that nudge.

The following pages unveil nine proven strategies to start, run, and grow a business the right way and double your sales – guaranteed!

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POISED ON THE EDGE OF SUCCESS

Like most entrepreneurs, you probably started your business in the pursuit of something greater than profits.

Maybe you dreamed of doing things your own way and being free from “The Man.” Maybe you longed for the flexibility to spend more time with your family. Or maybe you aspired to revolutionize your industry and change the world.

But if you are like most entrepreneurs, you have discovered that accomplishing those goals is not easy. Despite investing countless hours of sweat equity and emotional capital in your company, it still isn't enough.

Why does this happen? Why do so many entrepreneurs discover that instead of being set free, they have become enslaved by their business? Why do they spend time reading financial statements instead of reading to their kids? Why do they wake up to discover that instead of changing the world, the world has changed them?

We can't answer those questions in such a short book, but we can give you proven strategies that will help you grow your company the right way and, more importantly, empower you to achieve the fleeting aspirations that inspired you to start your business in the first place.

Let me begin by sharing a secret. . .

There is a fundamental marketing and sales principle that has held true since the beginning of time. People buy when THEY are ready to buy, not when you are ready to sell. This does not mean, however, that prospects will never buy from you. Most of them will. In fact, a recent study by the Gartner Group showed that 87% of prospects that inquire about a product will purchase it or a similar product within 12 months.

Your job is to be available when prospects are ready to buy. If you are not there, someone else is going to land that business. And guess what? That business owner was probably just lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time.

Why leave your sales to chance? Staying in front of your prospects is the single easiest way to boost sales and grow quickly. It is your responsibility to create moments of interaction and maximize those moments to close more sales, gain more customers, and grow your business.

This is where the tips in this book come in. They are the tools for creating and making the most of your prospect and customer relationships, and the ultimate key to your success!

SUPERCHARGE YOUR WEBSITE

Your website should be one of the most powerful tools you use to grow your business. Unfortunately, that isn't the case for most small businesses because they either have a beautiful site that is devoid of content or a sales-heavy site that drives straight to purchase, both of which fail to capture qualified leads.

Developing an effective website takes time, but with the right focus you can do it! Here are a few tips to get you on the right track.

1. Use a clear, non-distracting layout.

Your website layout and navigation play a critical role in capturing attention and pulling visitors deeper in to your site. If your navigation comfortably guides the visitor through your website or landing page, it will be natural for them to stick around. On the flip side, if your layout is distracting or confusing, visitors will leave in a hurry.

To test your website navigation and layout, pretend you are a new prospect and ask yourself the following questions (or better yet find someone who has never seen your site and ask them to answer these questions):

Where do your eyes go first? What is the most important thing on the page? Where do you think you are supposed to go next? Are there any distracting or confusing menu items or links that are tempting you to click on them?

2. Position yourself as an expert.

When a prospect visits your website, they should come away with the sense that **you are the expert** (or at least *an* expert)

in your field. Anything less means that they will continue to shop around until they find someone that inspires confidence.

Expertise can take many forms (such as social proof, awards, and testimonials), but the best way to prove that you are an expert is through relevant, readable educational materials. This is *real* value that you offer to your prospects in exchange for their trust.

3. Set up forms to capture leads.

Since most visitors coming to your site are not ready to buy, it's important that you capture their information so you can follow up later. This is usually done through web forms that request a name and email address in exchange for a lead generation magnet, such as a free report, book, coupon, etc.

To maximize opt-ins, post an opt-in form on your home page, above the fold (visible without needing to scroll). You can capture even more leads by posting an opt-in form on every page of your site. This provides an opportunity for visitors to be attracted to your magnet on every page.

FILL YOUR FUNNEL

Now that your website is supercharged, you're ready to start driving traffic to it so you can fill your funnel with tons of leads. The funnel, of course, is a metaphor used to describe the system of capturing prospects and converting them into customers.

The funnel is imperative to sustained business growth. You see, today's leads are tomorrow's buyers. By putting those leads in your database, you are securing a lucrative future for your company. The more leads you have in your funnel, the more buyers you're going to have down the road.

1. Create a powerful lead generation magnet.

A lead generation magnet is anything valuable you can provide to your prospects in exchange for their contact information. It could be a coupon, free report or whitepaper, demo, subscription, event invitation, or other kind of educational download. The right lead generation magnet will attract a steady flow of leads that you can convert into paying customers down the road.

Your magnet, whatever it ends up being, should:

- Appeal to your target audience,
- Provide a solution to their pains and frustrations,
- Have a clear title that conveys value, and
- Be packaged in a way that is appealing.

2. Describe the value of the lead generation magnet.

If you're giving something FREE to prospects (a lead generation magnet), you may be tempted to think, "Why would anyone *not* want this?" But that is dangerous thinking! Your visitor is really thinking, "Is this really something of value or are you going to just

SPAM me?" You absolutely have to answer the question, "What's in it for ME?" Describe the value of the lead generation magnet in terms of how it benefits the reader and do your best to enter the conversation that is already going on inside their head.

3. Use comfort language to build trust.

Often people hesitate to fill out forms because they don't want to get added to another email list or receive a sales call. You can address this fear (and capture more leads) by using comfort language to show the value they'll get and reinforce that they can trust you not to misuse their information. This can be an overt "Don't worry" statement, a link to your privacy policy, or a few sentences from your privacy policy posted in a prominent location next to your form.

4. Limit form field requirements.

Most people are comfortable providing their name and email address in order to download a free report or similar lead generation magnet, but hesitate when asked for phone, mailing address, or budget. In fact, opt-in rates drop significantly as the number of required form fields increases. A good rule of thumb is to only request the bare minimum amount of information on your web forms and collect more data as your relationship grows.

5. Ditch the "submit" button.

Most web forms include a standard gray button that says "submit" in all caps. To boost conversation rates, swap out the boring button for a more colorful one that reinforces the value of your lead generation magnet. Be creative and specific with your button language by saying "Send Me My Guide," "Register Now," "Place My Order," or something similar.

CONVERT YOUR FUNNEL

We've talked about how to supercharge your website and fill your funnel with leads. But if you fail to move your prospects through the funnel, you're not going to make any money.

The dirty little secret of small businesses is that they don't follow up with leads as well as they should. In general, it takes several communications before a prospect is ready to buy, but most businesses give up after one or two emails. However, if you stay in front of prospects, educating and building trust along the way, they'll come to you when they are ready to buy.

1. Get permission to follow up.

Just because someone fills out a form on your website doesn't mean that they want to hear from you every day. So before starting any email follow-up, be sure your contacts WANT to receive the information you're sending. Whether you include a checkbox on a webform, use a double opt-in, or collect business cards in a fish bowl, getting permission isn't just a good idea... it's the law!

Also, be sure to set proper expectations up-front regarding the frequency of your communications (weekly, monthly, etc.) as well as the content of your messages. By setting the right expectations up front, you can minimize SPAM complaints and develop a strong and responsive email list.

2. Make your leads jump through hoops.

The objective of a follow-up sequence is to get your prospects to move progressively towards greater commitment. This is the key to systematized growth.

Design your sequence to pull leads through a series of hoops to express their interest. Think of the initial opt-in form on your website as the first hoop. The next hoop could be to watch a demo or meet with a sales rep. Once a lead has jumped through enough hoops, you then assign the lead to a sales rep for one-on-one follow-up. Your multi-hoop system will increase sales rep efficiency and close rates because now they will be spending time working with qualified, motivated buyers instead of poor fits.

3. Vary your communications.

A great nurture sequence is comprised of follow-up messages in a variety of media (emails, letters, phone calls, etc.). The most important factor is that the messages have a specific purpose and provide value. When sequences contain meaningful information that prospects can use right away, they'll be more likely to look forward to your next email.

That's what the funnel is all about – capturing leads that aren't ready to buy and funneling them progressively toward greater and greater commitment through continuous, automated follow-up campaigns. It's about being there when prospects are ready to buy.

FLIP YOUR FUNNEL

You worked hard to fill your funnel with leads and convert them into paying customers. Now what? Most small businesses let out a sigh of relief and then move on to driving the next prospect through the funnel. However, this strategy leaves a lot of cash on the table. You need to flip the funnel.

Flipping the funnel refers to what you do AFTER the sale to maximize the value of your customers. The goal, of course, is to turn one-time customers into repeat customers and turn repeat customers into raving fans. There are two simple strategies you can implement to effectively flip the funnel.

1. Create customers for life.

The longer a customer stays with you, the more valuable they become. Your job is to convert customers into raving fans so that they'll buy from you again and again. To create customers for life you must continuously cultivate strong relationships that generate loyalty.

Contrary to popular belief, most customers don't leave a company because they are unhappy. They leave because of indifference. They don't feel special. So go above and beyond to wow your customers. A little humanity, honesty, and extra mile behavior can really make you stand out from the competition!

2. Up-sell and cross-sell on the thank you page.

Your "Thank You" page is extremely valuable real estate because it is the page your customer lands on *immediately after buying*. It is hot property because the person is likely in the mood to shop and will buy more – if you invite them to do so.

The page usually says something like “Thank you for your purchase,” but to increase revenue you have to be strategic about what you place on this page. Offer your customer a product or service related to what they just purchased (ex. “Would you like fries with that?”). Done properly, it is an excellent way to boost sales and deepen relationships with customers.

Many small business owners are afraid to cross-sell because they don’t want to be pushy. This fear is unfounded. As long as you follow a few basic rules, such as offering relevant products in a range of prices, your customers will appreciate that you made them aware of your other products and services.

WIN LIFELONG CUSTOMERS

If you have ever received disappointing customer service, you won't be surprised to learn that most companies spend more on acquiring new customers than keeping existing ones happy. After all, once a customer is on board, why bother investing more?

The truth is, just because a person buys from you once does not mean they will buy from you again. Winning lifelong customers requires the ability to not only get a prospect to buy again and again, but to do so happily. The key to making that happen is giving customers the experience they deserve and creating a relationship through consistent follow-up.

1. Keep a customer database.

If you want to manage your relationships effectively, you need a customer database that tracks their likes, dislikes, past purchases, interests, and anything else that could impact their decision to buy from you. Using that information, you can send a targeted marketing campaign that will wow the socks off your customers and give them a reason to return.

2. Make service a marketing strategy.

Great customer service can be a very effective marketing strategy. Consumers buy based on price when there is nothing to differentiate your product from other brands. Providing great customer service does exactly that. Remember, your company's attitude towards people can make you irresistible.

You have the ability to create loyalty through the relationships you build with customers. After all, the world is full of better offers. You're never going to be able to give your customers the best deal. But by treating your customers the way they deserve, you will be creating customers for life.

3. Wow your customers.

No one wants to be just another customer. They want to feel special. They want to feel that their decision to buy means more to the business owner than just another sale. But sometimes businesses get so caught up in the business of doing business that they forget to consider their most valuable asset – customers.

Providing great customer service doesn't have to be complicated. Simple solutions are best. Deliver what you promised. Then go above and beyond.

SELL PRODUCTS ONLINE

No matter what product or service your company offers, if you want to reach a broad market of willing buyers fast, you need to sell online. Not sure how or what to sell online? No problem! Here are a few ideas to get you started.

1. Decide what to sell.

There seems to be no limit to what you can sell online – everything from retail product to professional services can be (and are) sold online. When deciding what you should sell online the question is not, “Will it sell?” but rather, “Do I have an easy and efficient way to collect payment and deliver the product or service to my customer after they buy?”

2. Automate the logistics.

A key component to selling online is being able to collect payment and deliver products and services automatically. Merchant processors will give you the ability to collect credit and debit card payments; while e-commerce solutions will help you create your actual web store and shopping cart.

3. Make shopping fun and easy.

Whether your business is housed in a building or on a website, you must make the shopping experience fun and easy to maximize sales. When selling online, create detailed product descriptions, include high-quality photos, and make it easy to add and remove items from the shopping cart. When it is time to pay, make sure that shipping and payment options are crystal clear.

4. Minimize purchase anxiety.

Your website can't just be safe and secure. It has to LOOK safe and secure to minimize purchase anxiety. You can do this by providing a safe shopping guarantee, clearly spelling out the terms of your return and refund policies, and by providing instructions for buying offline. Social proof, such as partner icons from the Better Business Bureau and customer testimonials, are also effective.

AUTOMATE YOUR COLLECTIONS

Wouldn't it be nice if you received payment instantly every time you sold a product or service? But that's not how it works. Getting paid after the sale can be more difficult than closing the deal in the first place!

On top of collections, there are other financial matters to address. Invoices need to be mailed, credit cards need to be processed, payment plans need to be managed, and refunds need to be approved.

Ironically, the more you sell, the more financial overhead you need to manage. This distracts you as the business owner from focusing on what really matters. Here are few strategies to reduce overhead and help you collect the cash faster:

1. Prevent collection problems before they happen.

Establish a crystal clear payment and collection policy and share it with your customers. Provide an easy way for them to access information about how and when to pay – whether on the invoice, in an email, or on your website. If you can, incorporate a method for credit card processing to guarantee instant payment. Once that is in place, you will never again worry about collecting what is due to you for services rendered.

2. Ask customers to pay you.

Some business owners are just plain uncomfortable when it comes to asking customers to pay. If you are one of those people, you need to get over your fear and ask people to pay you! But with the Internet, at least you don't have to do it in person. You can create a friendly email collections campaign that

increases with urgency over time. This allows you to automatically collect from clients that simply forgot to pay so you can focus on growing your business.

3. Make it easy to pay.

Remind customers of how, when, and where to pay you. People have way too much to keep track of these days. To assume that they don't need a reminder to pay is like assuming you don't need to tie your shoes...if you don't do it, someone's going to get tripped up in the process!

4. Put your collections on autopilot.

Software can turn the nightmare of invoicing and collections into a simple, automated process that works every time. The right system will liberate you from tedious tasks by automatically creating invoices, tracking payments, managing payment plans, and alerting you of overdue or missed payments.

GROW THROUGH PARTNERS

Growing through partners is a fantastic way to grow quickly with little expense. The success of your program comes down to understanding what your partner's motivation is and developing incentives that best fit their needs.

1. Outline your objectives.

There are a lot of factors that contribute to the success of your partner program, so it is critical that you define what you want to achieve and then design your partner program around those goals. **You could use your partner program to:**

- Reach new markets,
- Generate more leads on a smaller budget, and
- Increase your credibility in the marketplace.

2. Identify target partners.

There are several types of partners you can join forces with. Referral partners are great at driving traffic to your site and generating qualified leads through their website, email marketing, and social media. Other partners are great at selling on your behalf. Since you only pay for performance, these types of partnerships have a high return on investment.

3. Offer incentives.

A successful partnership must be mutually beneficial. In addition to paying commission to partners, consider swapping marketing services (they advertise to your list, you advertise to their list) or developing a solution together that you can co-market.

MEASURE AND TWEAK

A lot of marketing dollars are wasted on campaigns that generate little or no return. This generally happens because it is difficult to predict the effectiveness of campaigns and because small businesses have little visibility into what worked in the past. This expensive, frustrating challenge can be solved with a simple process called measuring and tweaking.

1. Define success.

Identify what you hope to accomplish with your campaign. Do you want to generate leads? Move prospects through the funnel? Convert leads into buyers? Once you define success, you can figure out how to measure it.

2. Measure, measure, measure.

Success can be measured in terms of raw numbers – which is usually the case for lead generation and conversion campaigns – or by percentage, which is generally used to measure movement through the funnel as well as response rates. Benchmark response rates vary widely by industry, although the average rate for a lead generation campaign is 1% to 3%.

3. Test and tweak.

Testing takes the guesswork out of marketing and adds a scientific element that will give you the information you need to make the right choice. Plus it's easier (and more fun) than you think.

Begin by adjusting one factor at a time, such as the subject line of a promotional email. Email Version A to half of your list and Version B to the other half. Then measure and compare the open rates. The version with the highest open rate wins.

Once you determine the best subject line to use, you can test the design, copy, offer, and other elements to your heart's content. In the end, you will have a marketing strategy that is proven to work and grow your business.

When you track and measure your marketing messages, your ability to communicate with your customer or prospect improves. Your messages will be more specific and targeted and you can budget for the right type of marketing, rather than throw your money out the window on something that may or may not work.

PUT YOUR PLAN IN ACTION

Many people dream of changing the world, but few have the courage to actually try. You are one of those people. You have the courage, strength, and talent to make it happen.

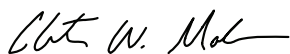
I sincerely hope that after reading this book, you find it easier to generate leads, convert prospects into customers, turn customers into raving fans, and sell more than you've ever sold before.

Implementing these tips may be a challenge but you don't have to do it alone. There are several software solutions that are designed to help you grow your business. However, there is only one solution that will help you with all of them, from supercharging your website to measuring and tweaking campaigns.

It's called Infusionsoft and it's the software my company has spent years perfecting. Infusionsoft is our way of revolutionizing the world, by making it easier for small businesses to grow quickly and profitably. I know that business ownership is not easy, but we are on a mission to change that.

If you would like to learn more about Infusionsoft and how it can automate your own business, visit www.infusionsoft.com.

Thank you for reading my book and good luck!



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