

Have you ever thought about ... Nurturing Creativity at Work?

Good managers know that creativity is essential for the health and prosperity of the companies they work for. And, therefore, good managers also know that their single most important job is to nurture creativity in those who report to them.

There are three keys to nurturing creativity:

1. Always acknowledge the importance of those who report to you and their contributions.

All people crave recognition and approval and it's a manager's job to make sure that workers get this.

Leaders are responsible for the morale of their departments.

2. Solicit the opinions of everyone in your department.

Include everyone in your meeting, from senior members of your team to the mail boy/girl. Take their suggestions and input seriously. You might be surprised who comes up with the best ideas.

3. Allow for completely open communication.

Don't prohibit discussion of certain topics and don't shoot down ideas that seem silly or inappropriate. And don't ignore input that you might view as a negative attitude.

If an employee tells you that

there is something going on that you didn't know about, don't ignore the problem and don't write the employee off as being a whiner.

Often, it's these kinds of conversations that plumb the well of creativity and can get everyone working towards the right goals. Even a bad idea can get people thinking and coming up with good ideas that ricochet off the original idea.

REMEMBER THAT GOOD MANAGERS FOSTER CREATIVITY.

They don't squash it to feed their own egos. And they don't ignore input — no matter where it comes from.

SOURCENOTE: Adapted from The Leadership Institute's website

Brainstorming

Seek commitment. People feel less loyal to employers now — but can still be committed to a team or project and to their professions. To foster commitment, emphasize tasks and outcomes, not functions and procedures ... build the best teams for tasks from internal workers, temporary hires, consultants and external suppliers ... provide all information and training needed to do the task well ... create a reward structure including a share in the profits from successful projects.

SOURCENOTE: Bernard Henry, in Better Managing

Go Ahead, Take a Chance

Have you ever had an opportunity that seemed like a long shot slip through your fingers?

The following story about U.S. poet and writer Langston Hughes is a good illustration of why you should take advantage of any opportunity that comes your way — no matter how small.

Hughes was working as a busboy in a hotel in Washington, D.C. While he was working, Vachel Lindsay, a well-known poet of the day, stayed at the hotel. Lindsay was in town for a reading tour.

While the poet was eating his breakfast one morning, Hughes approached him, laid copies of his poems on the table next to Lindsay's plate and left without saying anything to the poet.

The next day Hughes picked up a newspaper and read that Lindsay had announced that he had discovered a significant new voice in poetry. The veteran poet had read some of the novice's poems at the reading the night before. Hughes reported to work at the hotel for his shift and when he did he was mobbed by photographers and reporters.

Hughes went on to live a life of great literary success.

SOURCENOTE: Adapted from Bartlett's Book of Anecdotes



BY TOM GARRITY

The way I see it ...

The difference between 'good' and 'excellent' is *very, very small*.

Before the Industrial Revolution, we lived on farms and travelled on horseback. Afterwards we lived in cities and railroads and massive steamships made commerce, education, travel and prosperity possible. *So what powered the Industrial Revolution?*

Water. More specifically and more explosively, steam. Even at 211 degrees Fahrenheit, water is not very exciting. But add just one more degree and something amazing happens! At 212 degrees, you get steam and steam moves mountains! I'm convinced this metaphor applies to achieving our dreams.

The difference between 'good' and 'excellent' is very, very small. For many people, the difference between being slim and fit vs. gradually becoming heavy and unhealthy may only be 100 calories per day. Eat even a few more calories than you burn each day and you gain weight. Burn a few extra calories each day and you lose weight. Sure, optimum health may be more complicated but it starts with a very small number of calories, maybe only one cookie per day! This applies to any goal you want to achieve. Remember the old saying, "*inch by inch, anything's a cinch?*" The opposite is also true. "*Yard by yard, everything is hard.*"

High achievers know that small differences make all the difference. The Industrial Revolution changed everything and it began with only one degree of additional heat applied to common, everyday water. Boil the water, channel the steam and you've got a locomotive to change the world.

What small difference will you'll make this week? Perhaps you'll make one more sales call or prepare a bit more thoroughly for your next presentation? Whether in golf or sales or in the more "mundane" things like parenting, the top performers are rarely dramatically better. Typically, they are "ordinary people doing ordinary things, extraordinarily well." **This week, do a few ordinary things just slightly better. I think you'll see an extraordinary change in your results.**

Better Networking

Many inexperienced networkers think networking is just about selling something, but it's more about taking the opportunity to share knowledge and information.

To a lesser extent, it's also about receiving too. It's about many things, including:

- **Sharing ideas, information and resources.**
- **Helping people to meet their objectives.**
- **Creating opportunities.**
- **Cooperation.**
- **Talking and listening.**
- **Building long-term business relationships.**

Here are some tips to help you get more from networking.

Purpose

What do you want from each networking event you attend? Is it information, feedback, a competitive update, building a rapport with customers, raising your profile, or something else?

Preparation

Take business cards, prepare your introductory pitch, think of topical questions to ask. You could also read the list of

people attending and any event information such as location, start times and names of key contacts.

Keep Your Promises

Respond to referrals quickly, then give feedback and return phone calls as soon as possible. If you don't do what you said you were going to do within a given timeframe, you will probably lose the trust of your contact.

People Skills

Make conversation and keep your body language in check. Smile, listen, ask the right questions and dress appropriately.

Patience

You can't expect rewards to materialize overnight, but if you persist and keep your profile high, the rewards will come eventually.

SOURCENOTE: Enterquest

Getting in the Front Door of Prospects

Five Creative Marketing Ideas that Work

In my father's day, getting a new customer was a big deal.

By Elaine Fogel

As a travelling salesman in the clothing industry and working solely on commission, he knocked on plenty of store doors to pitch the owners or buyers.

Sometimes he got invited in, though there were plenty of times he didn't. All he could rely on for his first impression was his 30-second pitch, his smiling face and his friendly demeanor. His sense of humor was legendary. Eventually, he established his 'regulars' and sold them his line twice a year based on the seasons. Many of these customers became his friends and even in seasons when they didn't purchase anything he'd still stop by to shoot the breeze, hoping that the next visit would produce results.

It took him many years to build success. The frustrations he experienced in the earlier years competing against other manufacturer's representatives were tiring and dejecting.

Drastic Change

In just one generation, things have changed drastically. Lead generation (or prospect research) is scientific, supported by suppliers and list brokers that use technology to the max. Marketing communications channels can include direct mail, email, webinars, whitepapers, banner ads, conference exhibits and many more.

Capturing data and communicating the right information to the right audience at the right time in order to achieve the ultimate prize—to close a sale — is the objective. The long-term goal, though, is to establish customer relationships.

But how can you build and steward a long-term customer

relationship if you can't access your prospect in the first place?

Reaching those big fish you wish you could call your customers takes some creativity and perseverance, ingenuity, chutzpah and sometimes, just dumb luck.

Here are five creative ideas that can work for you, getting you in the front door of your next important prospect.

1. Connect via a Hot Line

Cold and warm calling have been around forever. After you get someone's assistant or voicemail for the umpteenth time, it's time for a new approach. Invest in a prepaid phone. Send it to your prospect in a gift box, by courier, with a note to check the messages. (Sounds like espionage, doesn't it?) Beforehand, leave a really good message that you've written and practiced to entice your prospect. Whatever you do, don't talk in a monotone, droning on about your product or service. You've got a captive audience for about 30 seconds. Make the best use of your time. Offer something or provide an incentive to call you right away. Make sure you've pre-programmed your number into the phone's memory. Be available to answer the call that day. The last thing you want is for your important prospect to get a busy signal or worse, your voicemail.

2. Go Nuts

Go to the grocery store and buy a variety of nuts. Nuts in shells, nuts in jars, nuts in cans. Pack them in a nice big gift bag with ribbon and decoration. Include a note card that says...

"You're a tough nut to crack."

Include your contact information and why you can help him/her.

(continued on p.4)



Keeping Your Customers

Some people argue that in today's price-driven world, there is no customer loyalty.

Let's face it, people go where they get the best deal. By that we don't mean the cheapest prices, but the best value for their money.

Just because your customer bought from you once, don't be fooled into thinking they will buy from you a second time.

Competition has become fiercer with the rise in consumer choices. It's hard to find a market, large or small, that doesn't already have multiple competitors battling for their piece of the pie.

So how do you keep your customers coming back time and again?

To answer this important question you need to take a moment and think about what would keep a customer coming back for business. Three instances come to mind:

- 1. The customer and the business have a positive relationship.** In this instance, the customer has formed a positive relationship with either a person who works for the business or with the business itself. Perhaps they had a great experience and they now have an emotional bond with the business. Unfortunately, unless the emotional bond is nurtured, it fades away fast and, quite frankly; there are extremely few businesses that nurture their relationships with their customers.

(continued on p.4)

Keeping Your Customers

(continued from p.3)

2. *The customer has an incentive to continue the business relationship.*

People are human and because of that we are naturally greedy. The principle of greediness is what makes capitalism successful. Businesses that reward (bribe) their customers with coupons, points, credits and bonuses create an incentive-based relationship that crumbles once the incentive is taken away.

3. *The customer 'has' to continue the relationship because the cost to change is too high.*

There is an instance in which the business has tied its operations into the customer's life or business so closely that to move to another product or service provider would cause damage emotionally, socially, operationally or financially. An example of this type of relationship would be a person who is emotionally dependent on their therapist (emotional) or a customer who has bought computer software that isn't compatible with other hardware (operational).

This is like an 'integrated relationship' because it extends into the life of a person or into the operations of a business.

Of the three types of integrated relationships (emotional, operational, financial), the operational relationship is the most powerful.

Operational relationships exist when the actual work processes of two businesses overlap. Untangling business processes is a mess and always has a very high switching cost.

SOURCENOTE: Enterquest

Getting in the Front Door

(continued from p.3)

Then have a courier deliver the gift bag.

3. **Guilt with Gifts**

Send your prospect a holiday gift. My graphic designer did this one year and I still use her services. This method uses the same psychology as address labels do in direct mail fundraising campaigns. The recipient feels a tad guilty or obligated and takes action. I received a lovely box of chocolates with a note indicating that she'd like an opportunity to show me her portfolio. No obligation.

How could I refuse? It turned out that she was talented, so I gained an excellent designer (in addition to a couple of pounds).

4. **They'll Eat It Up**

Send your prospect a catered lunch. I did that many years ago when I was trying to get the attention of a record producer. (I was a singer then.) Find out what he/she likes and ensure he/she's in the office the entire day, if you can. (Call the assistant ahead of time to find out when a good time is for a delivery.)

Make arrangements with an appropriate caterer or restaurant and pay by credit card so you have a record. Drop off a handwritten note to accompany the meal. Always say why you're writing and include a call to action, whatever that may be. In the case of the record producer, he called me. Of course, I'm not the famous singer I thought I'd be, but I got results that day.

5. **Play with Words**

Do some research on your prospect. Find out his/her likes, dislikes, hobbies and interests. For example, let's suppose she's a tennis player. Buy a case of tennis balls and wrap the box in shipping paper. Make sure to place a business card inside, along with a greeting card that uses a play on words to gain attention:

"Hello, Harry. It takes a lot of balls to get your attention. Now that I have it, all I ask is for 20 minutes — that's all. In 20 minutes, I'll show you how your company can save..."

Call in advance to find out if he/she is in the office. Don't do this if he/she's on vacation, out of town, or off sick. If you don't get a call back that day, follow up the very next morning.

Getting in the front door of prospects can work well with the help of technological bells and whistles. But sometimes, for the important ones, you need a little creativity to stand out, command attention and make them smile. All you're hoping for is a chance — an opportunity to meet in person and get in that front door. The rest is up to you.

SOURCENOTE: Elaine Fogel is president and CMO of Solutions Marketing & Consulting LLC (www.solutionsmc.net)

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