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Dear David:

Selling Today: Same Fundamentals; Different Tools



Things are getting very confusing in today's sales environment. While the fundamentals of connecting with customers and prospects remain the same, the ways of doing so are changing. New skills are needed, but the time to acquire them is limited. The pressure to change is constant, but there is little guidance on how change should take place.

In this issue of the Idea File, we'd like to offer our take on the situation. While not denying that change is the order of the day, we believe a little common sense about it all will help bring some order to the chaos.

Sales fundamentals

No matter how much things change, the fundamentals remain the same. So let's review some basics of the sales process.

- **Fundamental #1:** People buy from those they know and trust. The buying decision is based on relationship.
- **Fundamental #2:** To build trust, get to know your customers and prospects. Focus on helping first, selling later.
- **Fundamental #3:** A prospect will trust a referral coming from someone they know. Referrals take the burden of prospecting from the salesperson, so ask your customers for referrals.

- **Fundamental #4:** Show your trustworthiness by providing excellent service and exhibiting ethical behavior in selling and servicing your customers. This is the basis of a long-term relationship with a customer.
- **Fundamental #5:** Prospecting is the first and most important step in the selling process. Prospecting consists of identifying potential customers and qualifying them. A qualified prospect has the authority, desire and money to make a purchase.
- **Fundamental #6:** Prospecting requires a strategy and the tools and skills to carry it out. Part of the strategy is recognizing that prospects are not all alike, and tailoring the prospecting approach to their preferences.

What's different today

Prospecting begins with identifying potential customers. What is different today than in the past, is the amount of information that prospects share about themselves, the control they wish to exert over the selling process, and the window of opportunity for providing information to prospects.

A time-honored and effective way to identify prospects is to profile your existing customers. See if there are clusters of customers in industries or types of businesses in geographic areas, or sharing common characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity, household income). Then buy a mailing list that mirrors the profile.

What's next is what's new: conduct some research on the prospects using the same tools and techniques that they are using to check out your business. With a search engine, locate the suspect's business on the Internet. Is there a website or a Facebook page for the business? With social media, it is possible to get much more intimately acquainted with prospects. What additional information is available about the business (the type of business, its mission, and who its customers are) and the prospect?

Now pause. This research garners the same information that is usually gathered on the initial qualifying visit to a suspect. Only now, it can be done without having to convince the suspect to see you – a definite benefit of using a new tool.

Having additional information also plays well into a new expectation – that the first approach will offer much more focused information, tailored to the specific needs and requirements of the prospect. Prospects today expect companies to make it easy to do business with them, and to provide information, answers to questions, products and services much more rapidly than before. Dr. Joe Webb, a founding partner of PrintForecast.com and an industry consultant, calls the requirement ROT – return on time.

Using postcards for focused marketing

Using direct mail marketing to reach prospects and introduce them to your company, products and services is another time-honored and effective way to prospect. The new twist is to use postcards rather than elaborate enveloped mailings and to include interactivity as part of the design. A postcard campaign that directs the prospect to a website or personal URL (PURL) is far more effective in satisfying the prospect's need for information and in keeping control of the sales process.

Send a postcard with a great offer, and make the response device a PURL, a QR code for additional information or a discount coupon, and you'll drive visitors to a place where they can be identified, counted, and tracked.

Designing an effective postcard-to-web direct mail piece

One significant benefit of a postcard is that it doesn't have to be opened for the sales message to be viewed. In the past, the limited amount of space on a postcard compared to an enveloped direct mail marketing piece was seen as a disadvantage. By including an interactive link on the postcard, that limitation disappears.

When designing the postcard, consider what the viewer will see first. This is usually the side of the postcard with the address, so design this carefully. Your goal is to immediately attract attention and stimulate interest – the first two steps of AIDA (attention, interest, desire and action). Use a bold visual element – a photograph that bleeds off the top and sides of the postcard, combined with a provocative headline – at the top of the

postcard. The address panel can be placed along the bottom part of the postcard. It does not have to be positioned on the right half of the card.

Use the side with the address to create enough interest to cause the reader to turn the postcard over, where he will find the QR code or PURL. You can include the desire and action steps on this side of the postcard, or only hint at them, leaving the reader to find additional information via the web link where there is more room to be persuasive and more opportunity to use text, photos, videos and other tools.

Make an offer and create urgency

All direct mail pieces should include an offer and create a sense of urgency. The offer is the incentive the prospect needs to take the next step – to visit your website and identify themselves. A common way to do this is to ask a visitor to register as a condition of eligibility for the offer.

Finally, create a sense of urgency so the prospect will act now rather than waiting. Here is where a QR code, especially one leading to instant gratification such as a redeemable coupon, has great advantage. It is quick and easy, taking just a few minutes of the prospect's time. If properly constructed, the prospect may find it easier to respond immediately and move on rather than setting the offer aside for action later.

Don't throw the baby out with the bath water

Today's sales and marketing environment is evolving as marketers learn how to apply new technologies to the fundamentals of selling. But using the new technologies doesn't have to be an either/or thing. Blending what has worked in the past with new tools that satisfy today's prospects is the key to sales and marketing success.

Rule of 45

TIPS & TRICKS

James Obermayer of Sales Leakage Consulting offers the Rule of 45 to predict when a business-to-business sale will occur after a prospect makes an inquiry.

- Within three months, 10-15% of B2B prospects will buy someone's product.
- Within six months, 26% will buy someone's product.
- Within 12 months, 45% will buy someone's product.

This simple rule emphasizes the importance of follow-up to all inquiries. If a marketing campaign results in 100 inquiries, then on average, 45 sales will occur within 12 months. Since it is impossible to know which 45 out of the 100 will buy, then all 100 inquiries must be followed up until they either buy or decide not to buy.



What are the benefits of using a QR code in my printed material?



QR (quick response) codes - the 2-dimensional bar codes widely used in Japan and Europe - are beginning to appear in display ads and other printed media in the United States. QR codes may direct the reader to a website, a personalized URL (PURL) landing page, a video or a social media page.

Here's the benefit of using a QR code on a printed piece: the QR code makes it simple for the reader to go from the printed piece to the Internet using the camera feature on a smart phone.

Essentially, a QR code adds a live link to a printed piece that is analogous to a clickable link in an online message.

Consider incorporating a QR code into your next sales brochure or sell sheet? We can create the right QR code for the application and incorporate it into the printed piece for maximum impact without adversely affecting the design. For more information, contact **David Hull** at **763.425.4251**.



Does using paper for a direct mail campaign harm the environment? Decide for yourself after you read about the Hanna family, tree farmers in Gifford, South Carolina.

Harry Hanna's grandfather started buying land in the Low Country in 1890. His forests provided a steady supply of raw material for his small mill, which produced lumber for families and businesses in the surrounding rural community. Over the years, the Hannas acquired a lot of land and continued to grow trees; the family now owns 20,000 acres.

Managing the 20,000 as a tree farm has had real benefits for the environment and the local economy. What was once cleared farmland that failed to produce a healthy yield of row crops is now a vibrant forest with pine trees four stories tall. Land development has been held at bay. And the tree farm generates revenue for the Hanna & Hanna family business and its workers.

Before reflexively choosing e-marketing over traditional direct mail because of concerns for the environment, consider this:

- *The raw materials for paper are renewable.* 1.7 million trees are planted every day, more than three times what is harvested.
- *Electronic devices contain dozens of minerals and metals,* including gold, silver and palladium. Electronics have become the fastest-growing waste stream in the world.

AIDA: an acronym for attention, interest, desire and action, the four steps of the sales process.

Digital natives: someone who was born after the introduction of digital technology such as computers, the Internet, mobile phones and MP3s. Generally, someone born in 1989 or later. Digital natives are currently in their early 20s and just entering the work force. Digital natives expect to use social media such as Facebook and instant messaging as business tools.

Digital immigrant: an individual who grew up without digital technology and adopted it later.

Fundamentals: timeless principles that form the basics of processes and activities.

Ogilvy ad: an ad layout formula invented to legendary advertising expert David Ogilvy. The basic design elements of a classic Ogilvy ad are the visual, headline, caption, copy and signature. From this basic ad layout, other variations can be derived, including variations for postcards.

PURL: an acronym for personalized URL. A unique URL that leads to a website landing page or microsite that has been personalized to a specific individual visitor. A common format for a PURL is janedoe.xyz@association.org in which Jane Doe is the recipient of a direct mail or e-mail marketing message.

QR code: Quick Response Code, a 2-dimensional barcode originally developed in Japan.

Rule of 45: a rule devised by James Obermayer of Sales Leakage Consulting. The Rule of 45 predicts that 45% of business-to-business sales will occur within 12 months after a prospect makes an inquiry.

Social media: media for social interaction; the use of web-based and mobile technologies to turn communication into interactive dialogue. Also called consumer-generated media.

Suspects: a prospect who has not yet been qualified – i.e., no determination has yet been made about whether the person has the authority, the desire and the money to make a purchase.

URL: an acronym for uniform resource locator. A means of representing and identifying a page of information on the Internet.

VOCAB OF THE Graphic ARTS

VISIONS, INC. WINS...

CROSS-MEDIA 'GOLDEN PURL' AWARD

In recognition of truly successful cross-media marketing, Visions, Inc. is proud to announce winning a 'Golden PURL' award from the Indros Group, a national cross-media software firm. The award, given to companies that pioneer technology-driven marketing campaigns, recognizes outstanding achievements in the categories of 'Highest Response Rate' and 'Best Visit-to-Response Rate.'

Visions is proud to hold the award for the 'Best Visit-to-Response Rate' for a recent direct mail and PURL campaign created for a casino in the Southeast U.S. The campaign utilized leading-edge marketing technology to deliver personalized postcard mailers and individual PURLs for each recipient. The purpose of the campaign was to drive traffic to the casino during off-peak hours and to capture the e-mail and phone numbers of recipients for future opt-in marketing initiatives.

The success was astounding. The campaign resulted in a whopping 98.8% visit-to-response rate. What it means - Visions converted 98.8% of the campaign respondents that visited their PURL. In total, the campaign netted 14,000 email addresses and more than 11,800 phone numbers.

Jon Otto, Visions' CEO, accepted the award and commented, "As a full-service marketing and print provider, it is Visions' goal to provide leading-edge services that bridge traditional marketing channels with new and progressive technology. The GOLDEN PURL award is a generous recognition of our success in doing so."

VISIONS, INC. RECEIVES **TWELVE AWARDS** IN STATEWIDE PRINT COMPETITION

Star of
Excellence
Awards



Printing Industries of Minnesota

MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL, MN - Visions, Inc. was acknowledged for outstanding achievement at the annual Star of Excellence Awards, a statewide printing competition hosted by the Printing Industry of Minnesota, Inc., the state's trade association for printing, communication and graphic arts industry.

Competing against entries from printing and graphic arts firms throughout the state, Visions received twelve awards. Among the winning submission were:

- Best of Class in Cross-Media Promotion
- Best of Class in Art Books
- Best of Division in Service Catalogs

"We are very proud of our winning team, said Jon Otto, CEO. "It is an honor to be recognized by the industry as a company that produces top quality, award winning materials."

The Star of Excellence Awards recognizes those responsible for the creation and production of print communications in Minnesota. The competition promotes excellence in print communications and rewards companies and individuals who produce the best in print media.

PDFs for Print: 5 Common Problems to Avoid

PDF stands for Portable Document Format, a page layout file format originally invented by Adobe and now an open standard for sharing layouts for a variety of purposes.

We prefer to receive properly-prepared PDFs as a job submission format. PDF provides a streamlined workflow where everything is locked-in.

PDF PROOF OF A PDF JOB

We will always send you back a paper proof or a PDF proof, even when we are supplied a PDF for printing. When we send a proof PDF file, it is usually a low resolution PDF so that it's a smaller file size, allowing you to download it as fast as possible. The biggest reason for proofing PDFs is that sometimes they have errors. Let's review the common problems we encounter when trying to output and print customer-supplied PDFs.

FIVE COMMON PROBLEMS

As an open format, however, many software programs can now generate PDFs, and some of these PDFs are not prepared in a way that we can utilize in our workflow. The most common problems with PDFs include the following:

1. **Fonts not embedded.** The most common error that we find is that the fonts have not been embedded into the PDF. The PDF will seem OK on the computer on which it was created because the fonts are resident on that computer. Users of recent versions of Adobe InDesign and other CS issues need only to ensure that font embedding is enabled. Because there are many programs that can generate a PDF, and not all of them can embed all types of fonts, we recommend that users who want to submit job as a PDF file only create the PDF with a recent version of an Adobe product.
2. **Images not embedded.** Similar to fonts, sometimes PDFs arrive with images that have not been embedded. This may be due to the software you are using, or possibly because you have your PDF preferences set to an OPI (Open Prepress Interface) workflow, which embeds only a low-resolution version of an image with the assumption that the high-resolution images are stored on a local server for swap-out during output. Of course, if we don't have the high-resolution images, they won't swap correctly.
3. **Images left as RGB.** When images are supplied as RGB, they must be converted to CMYK. While this adds an extra step, we can easily handle the conversion as part of our output process.
4. **No bleed.** This is a bigger problem. When printing a color to the edge of the trimmed sheet (also known as a bleed), we need the color to extend beyond the edge. Otherwise, minor variations in the location of the trim can reveal the paper at the edge of the image. By extending the ink beyond the trim location (typically 1/8 inch), there is no chance of the paper showing through at the edge of piece.
5. **Marks not set to offset at 1/8 inch.** In the printing process, marks denote the location of the trim. These marks cannot extend into the bleed. If they do, in effect there is no bleed as we run the risk of the edge of the mark showing up if there is a slight variation in the trim location.

Choosing the Right Profile

If you are using a professional design program such as Quark XPress or InDesign, choose the PDF X1/A profile when creating the PDF. This profile has all of the correct options chosen for job submission to a printer.



Better Blends

Avoid the dreaded stair-stepping

Blends can make even the kitchen dishes interesting. But making them wrong can make your design a wash. The last time you used a blend in a design you got burned. Instead of looking smooth, there were obvious strips of color. It was a bad day.

Banding is the most common problem with blends, which are also known as fountains, vignettes, graduated fills, degradés and gradients. Blends are basically a graphic technique used to create a smooth transition from one color to another. Made properly, they look great and add excitement to a design. They are especially useful in backgrounds, to highlight headline text or to draw attention to something.

It is the limitation of PostScript (the language used to send information to an output device) that causes the problem. PostScript allows a maximum of 256 different shades per color. Blends are made with bands of color, but the illusion of a blend only works when the bands are small enough for the human eye not to figure it out. When you see stair-stepped bands in what should have been a smooth transition, the optical illusion fails. Small bands from .01 to .03 inches work best.

There are several ways to make blends in your designs. Some of them are better than others for big blends, but take some more time. In QuarkXPress, it is OK to use the Cool Blends Xtension for small blends but it is the least preferred way and most likely to cause problems.

Creating blends in Adobe Illustrator or Macromedia FreeHand is good for small blends, but shouldn't be used for large stuff. Sometimes even the best artists forget about the limitations of PostScript and use blends extensively in an illustration, only to see banding all over when it is printed large.

For large, page-sized blends, the best tool is Adobe Photoshop. It takes more time and some experimenting, but you can create some incredible gradients with Photoshop. Save your work as a TIFF and use the Add Noise filter to disguise potential banding. Use a low number (1 to 4) and select the Uniform option (not Gaussian). This is a good trick to keep the eye fooled.

Here are a few tips you can use to avoid the banding blues:

1. Use Photoshop for large blends
2. Increase the difference in color between the starting and ending tints.
If you have a four-color job and the difference in three of your colors is 60 percent and only 5 percent in one (like black), then that color might show banding while the others won't. Banding in the lighter colors (like yellow) may be masked by the other plates but darker colors may have visible bands.
3. Keep your blends short. The larger the gradient the more likely it will show bands.
4. Use paper that will have a large dot gain. When the ink spreads, it can mask some banding problems.

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At Visions, we've evolved on the cutting edge of the communications industry, blending creativity, craftsmanship and technology into a powerful menu of marketing services.

Our unique offering integrates a highly creative direct marketing group with dynamic web development services... all supported by a complete printing, fulfillment and mailing facility featuring both offset and digital technology.

Contact **David Hull** at **763.425.4251** for more information on how Visions can assist you with your next project.



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