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Some ways to become memorable to prospects

Denver Business Journal - by [Garry Duncan](#)

Estimates say we experience at least 200 advertisements in the workplace and more than 2,000 personally on a daily basis.

Increasing competition is affecting everyone. Gaining attention in a noisy and cluttered marketplace gets harder every day and is more important than ever.

No one questions the value of being memorable in the customer's mind. Product differences aren't always enough to sway the buyer. If all you want to do is watch a movie once a month, any comparably priced DVD player will suffice.

When the stakes are close, it's all about the salesperson's ability to distinguish themselves from their competitors. Setting personal presence and skills aside, there are additional tools.

To be memorable before or after an initial meeting, implement an accurate record-keeping system, be consistent in your follow-up, use good judgment in your choices and be creative. Using these tools together is the way to affect revenues.

Let's take them one at a time.

- You can appreciate the value of record-keeping if you've ever experienced someone else forgetting an important conversation.

Avoid the risk of being embarrassed with a poor memory. There are many record-keeping systems, contact managers or CRM (customer relationship management) programs to track what works, what doesn't and who received what.

Categorize contacts into three groups: (1) those you are attempting to establish a new relationship with, (2) those currently in the sales and decision process, and (3) current and past customers with potential for additional business. Each situation requires a methodology that fits.

- Consistent follow-up gets results, and that's why you need good record-keeping skills. The goal is to gain and retain attention, not to annoy or become a pest.

When deciding on frequency, consider the situation and the individual. For example, when

trying to initiate a new relationship, a daily call or weekly post card may be the best ticket. For current or past clients, weekly may be too often for some and not enough for others.

The type of industry is also a consideration. For example, large equipment needs aren't likely to change weekly, but supplies of disposables may change daily. Regardless which interval of contact you choose, stick with your plan and work it consistently.

Make your job easier by asking existing clients and prospects which methods they prefer to receive information and reminders. Do they like e-mail, phone, mail, personal visits or some combination?

- Acquiring astute judgment in methods of follow-up may take some practice. Make your intent clear. You don't want anyone to feel like you're trying to buy their business.

In some industries, entertainment, trips and expensive dinners are routine and accepted methods of doing business. In other situations, a handwritten personal note or small favor is better. Mailing a copy of an article on a personal subject of interest will mean more to one person, while another would prefer an expensive box of chocolates.

Assistants and colleagues are great sources of information to find out individual preferences if you don't already know.

Be cautious about appearing pretentious with potential clients with whom you're trying to build a relationship. It's better to err on the side of being conservative than going overboard. Here the thought really does count more than the expense.

- Being creative is the fun part.

Finding new ways to be unique and tasteful is far more important than expense alone. Never undervalue a heartfelt personal note referencing a comment or something that transpired in a meeting. It conveys sincerity, sets you apart and works.

One very creative salesperson obtained appointments by walking into offices with an empty coffee cup stuffed with a packet of instant coffee, a tea bag, a packet of creamer and a freshly baked cookie in a baggie. The note attached to the cup asked the decision maker if there was time for a five-minute coffee break. More often than not, it worked. Even when the contact was too busy, she frequently received an invitation to come back at another time.

Hot coffee on a blustery afternoon or a cold ice cream bar or fruit drink on a hot summer day can be a welcome and remembered follow-up. One of my favorite examples is a salesman who had a prospect who said, "I just can't remember you when I have a need. I have used your competitor for years." The salesman immediately bought 30 humorous cards, wrote a personal note on each and mailed one daily. After only two weeks, he was taking orders on a regular basis.

Ad specialty companies offer many unique items and leave-behinds for follow up. You can use the season as a theme to create other simple follow-up ideas. For example, green carnations on

St. Patrick's Day, pumpkins on Thanksgiving or small flags on the Fourth of July can be your own personal trademark.

Special events for groups of customers or prospects also work, but they're more expensive and still require one-on-one follow up to get the best result.

Consider unusual events for groups such as scheduling behind-the-scene tours at theaters, museums or zoos. Sponsored speakers on personal or current topics (investing, vacation tips, golfing etc.) unrelated to the product are also an option for group events that will make you memorable.

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