

**“THE FINANCIAL TIMES GUIDE TO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT”
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A SUMMARY

Focus on converting leads, not just generating them.

Don't let your administration get in the way. When your internal processes become more important than commercial objectives, you have a problem. Get the right employees and they will get the right business results. Remember that trust is essential.

Ask what action you need to take to increase the conversion rate of your company's current leads or enquiries into profitable customers.

Just consider the effect on your business if you could –

1. Generate an extra 10% more leads or enquiries.
2. Convert 10% more of your current leads or enquiries into customers.
3. Sell one additional service/product to 10% of your existing customers.

Consider increasing your prices –

1. When was the last time you increased prices?
2. What would happen if you added a small percentage to your prices?
3. How much business would you lose as a result of any price increase?
4. How much business might you gain from new customers if they perceive you as being at the premium end of your market?

Position your business as specialists and tailor your solutions.

What's the point in spending time, money, creative energy and manpower on generating leads if you don't convert as many as possible into profitable business?

Convert leads & enquiries into profitable business –

With the following methods it's possible to increase success rates by 10% in one month and triple them in six months. Commandments of converting leads –

1. Anyone who talks to prospects is in “sales”.
2. Challenge & question current methods. How good are your conversion rates?
3. Quantify potential revenue from leads. The number of leads/enquiries multiplied by the average customer spend, equals potential revenue.
4. Track and monitor the right information. How many enquiries do you get per day/week? What are your leads & enquiries worth in average revenue terms? Who handles the enquiries? What are the individual handler's conversion rates?
5. Get the batting order right. Monitor who gets the best conversion rates so they can handle the majority of enquiries.
6. Differentiate.
7. Don't fall into the price trap.
8. Get the basics of telephone first response right. Tell your people how you want incoming calls to be answered.
9. Get outside help to view your situation with fresh perspective.
10. Understand the five step conversion process for each lead/enquiry –

a) Invite your prospect into a conversation and set an agenda –

Prospect – “Tell me your fee”.

Handler – “Absolutely, no problem, more than happy to help. But listen; are you okay for a few minutes so I can get some background about (whatever)? Then I can give you the most appropriate figure and we can discuss when would be the best time to get things done. Is that alright?”

b) Build rapport with the prospect.

c) Bounce back – So Mr/s Prospect, let me see if I have understood this correctly. What you're saying is (whatever). Is that correct?

d) Give the information requested – Does that make sense to you? Would that be helpful? Have I explained this properly or is there anything you would like me to run through again? Do you have any questions for me?

e) Ask for what you want.

Develop more business from existing customers by –

1. Knowing your customers.
2. Keeping your customers happy and measure their feedback –
 - a. How do they rate the quality of your service/products?
 - b. How do they rate the experience of dealing with your company?
 - c. Would they use your company again?
 - d. What would they like you to improve?

According to research by TARP (Technical Assistance Research Program) –

- a. Only 5% of customers complain.
- b. 75% of B2B customers complain to someone in the front line.
- c. 25% of B2B customers don't complain.

Solution –

- a. Soliciting & satisfying a complaint results in a 50% increase in loyalty.
 - b. Moving a complainant from dissatisfied to satisfied raises loyalty by 30-50% and a source of 25-75% of new customers.
 - c. Customers who complain and are subsequently satisfied are up to 8% more loyal than if they had never had the problem.
3. Keep in touch with your customers.
 4. Offer additional products/services.
 5. Get customers to recommend and refer.

Remember, if your competitors think it's worth investing in targeting your customers, why don't you?

Externalise business development efforts to generate new leads and enquiries.

Re your website, ask yourself –

- a) Why might someone consider you?
- b) What is their emotional state?
- c) What emotional state will they want to be in after they have used your service?

It's always important to specialise on your website. Always have a call to action. Remember Google Adwords.

Consider collaborating with another company for mutual benefit.

Brand – your brand is what people say about your business when you're not present.

Viking River Cruises' strapline is "The world's leading river cruise line – by far".

Targeting by telephone – "I really appreciate you taking my call, because I know when it's the other way round, how frustrating it can be taking calls totally out of the blue. I realise the likelihood is that you have an existing supplier, but I wonder if you would mind sharing with me if and when you will be reviewing contacts?"

Business development skills –

"Would it be useful/helpful to fix up an appointment?"

"When is it convenient to get together to take this further?"

"Based on what you've just told me, it strikes me the best way of taking this forward is for us to get together."

"How are you off for a meeting (whenever)?"

Use words like - You, Save, Improvement, Results, Powerful, Easy to Use, Dramatic Difference, How to, Without (extra) Risk.

"Have you ever wondered what makes some business development activities more successful than others?"

"What is the quickest and most fool proof way to win more profitable customers?"

Do you know the biggest reason why business development efforts fail? The answer is simple – the inability to action the best ideas. Your "have to do" targets for the next 12 months are –

- 1) Increase the conversion rate of your leads & enquiries into business by 10%.
- 2) Increase volume of business from existing customers by 10%.
- 3) Increase the number of new leads & enquiries coming in from external activities by 10%.
- 4) Increase your prices where you can by 10%.