

3 Obvious Sales Strategies You May Be Neglecting

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Don't look to Larry Fishelson if you'd like to commiserate about slow sales. His business is booming.

Fishelson co-founded DynaLink Communications, a telecom provider in New York City, just before the recession hit. The licensed telephone company — which has built multimillion-dollar sales despite the poor economy — buys the excess capacity of 13 major carriers at wholesale prices, sells it to customers, and issues its own bills for the service. In 2009, the profitable firm achieved 30 percent year-over-year revenue growth.

Fishelson, the company's chief operating officer, is a veteran sales guy. In his previous job, running U.S. sales for XO Communications, he had plenty of opportunities to learn what it takes to win and hold onto customers. He brought what he learned to DynaLink Communications.

Here are three of the strategies that have helped him position his company for growth. They may seem obvious at first glance, but so many companies neglect to use them. Whether you run a hair salon or high tech startup, these tips should help you improve your sales.

Skip the cold calls

Instead of trying to build relationships with potential customers from scratch, DynaLink Communications took the time to negotiate deals to sell its services through 300 independent sales agents. Ranging from small telecom equipment providers to industry consultants, these sales people already worked with Fishelson's target clientele and had an "in" with them. "They have relationships with thousands of customers," he says. Are there any noncompeting companies that already work with your target clientele? Consider forming your own partnerships with these firms to sell your product or service.

Answer the phone

Fishelson knew from his years in the telecom industry that one common reason that many businesses lose customers is being slow when respond to customers' concerns. Fishelson turned that knowledge to his advantage at DynaLink Communications. "We have a motto: 'We will call

you back," says Fishelson. "When a customer's service is out, we will call that customer every single hour until it is fixed."

Fishelson has asked his team to take problems to his top executives earlier than competitors typically do, as well. "There's an escalation list through the company — up to my cell phone," he says. Making it easier for customers to reach a live person who can solve their problems gives DynaLink Communications an edge in getting word of mouth publicity and renewing the contracts it already has. It beats trying to replace lost customers. Are you and your team making an all-out effort to respond to customers' concerns and problems? If not, look for ways to step up your game — and you're likely to see much better sales results for the long term.

Make sure you bill accurately

Sloppy billing is common in many industries. Fishelson has found that many of his new customers are pleasantly surprised when his company does a review of their first bill with them by phone or, in the case of larger companies, in person to make sure it is correct. "We review it with them to make sure the rate is correct, it's the exact service they ordered, the price is what they contracted for and they understand the bill," he says. He knows that if customers have confidence that his company will treat them fairly, it will build substantial good will — which ultimately translates to better sales.

Is your small business doing all it can to ensure that its bills are accurate and that customers understand them? If not, take some time this month to put a new system in place. In building trust with customers, seemingly mundane steps like this can do far more for your company's long term sales efforts than many jazzy marketing campaigns.

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