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May 2, 2011

Personal Approach to Sales Prospecting Yields Results

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Small-business owners focused on increasing sales sometimes turn to prospect lists – names of potential customers researched on the internet or purchased from a marketing firm. Even if the selection criteria are finely targeted, “cold calls” made from these lists result in fewer sales than calls made to people with whom there is a personal relationship. The key is to turn unknown potential customers into personal connections.

One approach is to generate an ongoing prospect list from public announcements about people who have won industry awards or reached achievements of note, and use the announcement to make a personal connection by sending a letter of congratulations. The letter should be written and addressed by hand, and suggest how doing business together can make the award-winner become even more successful.

For example, a company that sells employee wellness programs might send “Best Places to Work” award winners a letter saying, “Congratulations on your business’s recognition as one of the best places to work in New Mexico. We offer employee wellness programs to help small business owners like you support a healthy work environment and top-performing employees.” A brochure, along with an invitation to discuss the topic further, should be included.

Create a personal list

Professional organizations that have annual competitions are good sources for creating customized lists of award recipients. The New Mexico Advertising Federation’s Addy award and the New Mexico Marketing Association’s Marketer of the Year award are just two of those bestowed by more than 250 professional associations in the state. A list of associations in New Mexico can be found at www.nmnetlinks.com.

Newspapers and magazines recognize local leaders through competitions and awards. New Mexico Business Weekly’s annual competitions include Best of the Bar, Healthiest Employers, Top CEOs, Who’s Who in Technology and Women of Influence. Albuquerque Magazine awards the Best of the City.

Most chambers of commerce host at least one annual event to recognize business leaders and companies. These might include business of the year, small-business person of the year and best

in business excellence. Many use unique monikers, such as the VIVA award given by the Association of Commerce and Industry.

The New Mexico Small Business Development Center network, with 20 offices around the state, recognizes growing businesses through Client Success awards. The U.S. Small Business Administration New Mexico district office presents Small Business Week awards. Other business-support organizations with awards include Quality New Mexico, Technology Ventures Corporation, ACCION, WESST, and Northern New Mexico Connect.

Beyond Awards

Owners of businesses that have improved their industry ranking or achieved another form of success can also be targeted. Most business publications print weekly announcements of new-hires, promotions and product launches. Completion of specialized training courses and appointments to boards of directors are sometimes mentioned.

In an increasingly high-tech and distant world, this “high-touch” prospecting method can foster long-term customer relationships that result in greater sales generation.

WESST offers specialized training and workshops on small business marketing. Visit www.wesst.org to learn more.

Finance New Mexico is an initiative of the New Mexico Small Business Investment Corporation (NMSBIC) and its partners to assist individuals and businesses in obtaining skills and funding-resources for their business or idea. To learn more, go to www.FinanceNewMexico.org.

