

How to Find NEW Customers in Today's Fickle Market! *Seven Strategies to Keep Them Coming In*

By Julie Escobar

Competing in today's service industry involves stepping outside the ordinary and stepping up your visibility in your market area. With an ever-fickle consumer, and competitors continuously entering the market, carving your niche and maintaining your share of the "pie" is increasingly difficult. Your top task is to get your organization's name, reputation and message to the forefront of your community's collective conscience so that you can begin – and continue to drive NEW customers to your business! To do that, let's look at seven strategies that are turning heads, filling seats and ringing registers across North America:

1. Lead Generation: Lead generation is on the top of your to-do list – right? Unfortunately for many business owners unsure of where to start, unsatisfied with past results of limited marketing campaigns or simply too busy and overwhelmed to do their homework that answer is a resounding "no." So how do you get more "butts in seats" as they say in the restaurant business? Simple – prospect. I know, it's a "dirty" word for a lot of you, but relying on expensive ads in the paper, sign out front and hopefully the word of mouth of your past customers is simply not enough to maintain most business models today. What can you do?

2. Advertising: Print advertising has taken a pretty substantial hit in the last few years, and for good reason. Calculating measurable results and ensuring your offer is reaching the right eyes and enough impressions to make it worthwhile is also cumbersome for most. Our recommendation is if you are still going to utilize print advertising in the paper or magazines, you add an online component so that you can at least measure results by tracking web hits. After all, the internet is primarily the first resource consumers use when searching for a product or service.

3. Traditional direct mail: Direct mail is still a hot-ticket, viable marketing solution and one being used successfully every day. So direct mail works, but NOT in the old school "spray and pray" approach, where companies could afford to send out huge blanket mailings to an entire city in the hopes of connecting with those consumer who MIGHT match our perfect customer profile. This method leaves you paying for marketing materials that are being sent to people who would never buy your products or services and in most cases, leaves you unwilling or unable to send additional mailings because the size of the mailing is so cost prohibitive.

4. Targeted direct mail: Now we're getting somewhere. I know what you're thinking. "Direct mail doesn't work." Tell that to the companies that are getting 3%, 5%, even 8% response rates. The difference: targeted lists. Now, with the ability to craft lists through services such as Dataleader.com you can:

1. identify your perfect customer, (example: woman, 40-60, at least two children, household income between \$65,000-\$100,000 that lives within five miles)
2. choose those variable in a demographic radial search of your area
3. craft an offer that's compelling and presents your USP or unique selling proposition

4. mail no less than three mailings. Consider the wise words of marketing guru Dan Kennedy, "Everyone shows up once. The game is only won by those who show up again, and again and again."
5. Put a system in place to convert those leads.

5. Targeted direct mail with variable data coupled with personalized URLs: Now marketing is really turning up the heat. Pairing the effectiveness of direct mail with the speed, accountability of the internet, companies are now driving traffic to their businesses by creating more relevant, compelling marketing pieces that use variable data such as their first name and images of their interests that also have a personalized internet landing page with the recipient's name in the web address. This allows owners and managers to count web hits, offer a free coupon or download to capture email addresses and track the effectiveness of the marketing piece.

6. New and improved! When it comes to setting new standards, there's a new "kid" in town. Business owners are now taking the old concept of birthday marketing and tapping into a new birthday prospecting solution. Why? In the past, the idea of "birthday" anything was more of a "drop your business card in the fish bowl or fill out the information card on the table and one day we hope to get around to putting that in a useable database and send you something on your birthday technique." Either that, or they'd simply acknowledge those guests already in their establishment with a free gift of some sort as a way of wishing them well. Birthday prospecting actually puts the marketing machine in place to allow businesses to prospect for NEW customers, as well as appreciate their current regulars. Consider the success being heralded by the folks over at www.Birthdayprospecting.com. Their customers range from spa directors, restaurant and hotel managers, boutique owners and service industry professionals from a wide spectrum of verticals who now are reaching out to area consumers celebrating their birthdays in the coming month, and they are doing that without lifting a finger. They simply set their budget, determine their perfect customer base, create a compelling offer and let the marketing machine take over!

How it works: A radial search is conducted to find every matching customer demographic with a birthday in the next month, a postcard is sent with a special, compelling birthday offer, and the consumers are driven online to personal, customized landing page. That consumer's information is then tracked and recorded and delivered to the business owners in an online report! It's that easy. In fact, here's what David Suarez, Managing Partner at Aveda Level 2 Salon and Spa had to say, "We get consistent and measurable results and we're collecting valuable email data from clients who are opting in to start building a relationship with our spa. It's a proactive marketing tool that sends a very special message from our spa to the members of our community. Combining the innovation of the birthday prospecting system with the Aveda brand has been a winning combination."

7. Take Advantage of the Times: There has never been a more challenging or exciting time to be in this business. Though competition is great, the resources, tools and technology available are even greater. Arm yourself with as much knowledge and as many tools as possible. With the right commitment, a specific plan and a forward thinking perspective on success, you will create the foundation for a powerful year. I wish you success!

If you are interested in sharpening your company's competitive edge, contact the team at BirthdayProspecting.com and Opportunity Knocks today at 1.800.287.5710. They've got the answers you need at the budget that makes sense for your company!

Want to see how many potential customers have birthdays near YOUR business? Click here!