

## **How to Expand Your Business Customer Base**

By Jeannette Perez

In today's unpredictable economy, business owners can no longer rely solely on their current clients to sustain their business. They must reach out and come up with new ways to appeal to a larger, more diverse audience. Take a moment and try out some of the strategies below which should help you broaden the reach of your business and remain competitive in today's market.

### **Make Your Virtual Audience a Real Audience**

If you are currently using social networking to market your business, or are thinking about it, give your customers a reason to physically come into your store or establishment by offering coupons or other specials online. Facebook and Twitter are both great sites to start marketing to a particularly younger audience. For example, if you own a restaurant, you can offer deals or an invite to a special tasting only to your Facebook or Twitter audience. When your followers see these deals, they may want to share them with friends who may then share the information with their friends. By posting one special on your page, you may be reaching far more people than you originally intended.

### **Reach Out by Cold Calling**

Even though most businesses are trending towards social networking, a simple phone call can still reach a lot of people that the internet can't. Keep in mind that there is typically a lot of rejection when making cold calls, but you can get over your fear of rejection by practicing. To start, take out your address book and call clients that you haven't spoken to in awhile. Don't just limit your calls to prospective clients; also contact people who may be able to refer your business to others. For example, if you are in the service industry (i.e. landscaping, construction, roofing, etc.) you may want to build a relationship with a realtor who can refer you to their clients.

### **Expand Your Product Line**

Although some customers may frequent your business for its predictability, another group of potential customers may be avoiding it because the products never change. There are so many choices in today's market, whether it be salons, retail, physicians, or contractors, that you must stay competitive in your offerings. Keep your business fresh by offering rotating specials and limited time products. In the restaurant industry, many chefs are beginning to offer daily menus in addition to their standard offerings to highlight ingredients that are at the peak of the season. This variety makes customers want to come back more often to try out limited dishes, while still allowing regular diners access to their favorites.

### **Put Yourself Out There...Literally**

Social networking and cold calling can only take your business so far. Real, face-to-face networking is essential to making personal connections with your audience. One way to reach out in a personal way to many people at the same time is by speaking or participating at an event. Whether that be a tradeshow specific to your industry or a more widely accessible community event, you can learn a lot about your customer base at an event as well as share your message with a wide and diverse audience.

For more information on how to widen your business customer base, including web links and a book list, visit our website at [www.vipccs.com/resources](http://www.vipccs.com/resources)

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