

Getting The Most From Prospect Meetings



Whatever the nature of your business, at some point you are going to be involved in a meeting with a prospect; who presumably you would like to convert into a client?

So, what is the best way to prepare yourself for optimum performance?

Prepare

I guess this could be considered obvious, but how many meetings have you been in when someone was trying to sell to you and they hadn't done their homework?

- **Research** – this is the first step. Make sure that you have undertaken your due diligence on the person and/or company that you are meeting.

With the internet, it is fairly straightforward to find out information about a company. Their website is the primary place to start.

But financial information is also relatively easy to acquire. The people you are meeting may have LinkedIn profiles that you can review in advance.

Have there been any press releases or news articles about the company?

The balance here is not to arm yourself with so much data that you can't see the wood for the trees and you might be blinkered by what you have, so keep it appropriate to the meeting that you are having.

- **Identify challenges** – what are the key issues or needs of the business that you might be able to help with?

Presumably, on the basis that you have chosen the right prospect who is in the market for what you are offering, then you will already be aware of what challenges your product or service may address?

- **Proposed solution** – armed with the above information, be prepared to offer a relevant solution that meets the needs of your prospect.
- **Benefits** – people make an emotional decision to buy based on the benefits that they perceive you are offering; so don't get bogged down in the features of your business but be aware of the benefits that your proposed solution will offer.

Question

During your meeting, ask open questions so that you stand the best chance of gleaning information from your prospect:

- Who/Which?
- Why?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- How?



Listen

Whilst you are (*or should be*) in the driving seat for the meeting, make sure that you listen. You have two ears and one mouth; use them in that proportion!

Patience

Try not to leap to conclusions or solutions and close the meeting too early. Whilst there may be a defined time over which the meeting will happen – take your time.

Relax

There is no rule that says you have to close the deal on the first meeting, so give yourself a break and don't put yourself under too much pressure to perform; as this could have a negative effect on the outcome of the meeting and you may come across as too desperate to get the order.

Follow Up

Whatever commitments you have made in the meeting make sure that you follow up and deliver what you said you were going to do in the time frame that you said you would do it.

This maintains your credibility with the prospect and keeps the door open for the next step in your journey to secure the sale.

Rules Of Customer Engagement



In this day and age, more than ever is it important to stay in touch with your customer base – and I don't just mean invoicing them!

Customers are...

- ...more easily disappointed
- ...quicker to judge
- ...less willing to forget
- ...switch provider after one negative experience

So, unless you are getting feedback from your customers on a regular basis so you know where you stand with them and the product or service you offer; you are in danger of losing them to your competitor.

But not to worry – help is at hand and tasking note of and following the points below will put you in a much better position to stay engaged with your customer base; and, in so doing, continue to develop and grow your business.

Put the customer at the centre

Your business is reliant on customers so the focus of what you do should be customer centric.

The decisions you make, the processes and systems that you put in place should all enhance the customer experience; not be a barrier to the sales and marketing process.

Assess what is holding you back

What is getting in the way of providing your customers with the ultimate experience of doing business with you. Is there anything that interrupts the ease of doing business with you?

Mandate leadership to drive engagement

Allow different departments to implement their own ideas to keep that connection with customers and give them the authority to make day to day decisions that can impact customer interaction.

Create a single view of the customer

All stakeholders within the business should have the same perception of the customer.

Everyone should know the customer service standards for the business and this should permeate throughout the business so there is a constant message and purpose when dealing with customers anywhere within their journey with your company.

Capture/act on customer insights and behaviour

Do you really know what your customers think, what their reasons for doing business with you are?

Maybe there is the need for a regular or ongoing customer survey to get feedback on where you stand.

Focus on delivering value

Anybody doing business with you has seen the value of your product/service offering.



Understanding what value you are providing for the money that customers are parting with enables you to continue to add value going forward and keep existing and/or new customers buying.

Focus on all journeys

Customer service and engagement doesn't just happen at the point of transaction, it should be apparent throughout the business whether it is the accounts department, marketing, operations or the cleaner; any of which could come face to face with a customer at some point.

Think beyond marketing

Don't constantly spend your time and effort marketing to your customers, there are other ways of providing a great level of customer experience – offering rewards, free items, a gift, customer surveys or simply just having a conversation with a customer about them rather than what they might buy from you.

Are you doing all that you can do to enhance your company's engagement with your clients?



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