

## **Business Success Requires Making Sales**

Business planning, marketing, financial tracking and forecasting, and staffing are all parts of running a business. Yet none of these keep the store's front door open for very long. For a business to be successful, the owner needs to sell his or her product or services.

"The first step is getting the customer in the door, whether physically or online," says [Insert name and county]. "To do that requires two basic pieces: First, the customer must know you are in business. And second, the customer must know what you offer and how it can benefit him or her."

Both of these requirements begin with understanding who your customers are, where they are and what they need to solve their problems, along with having some idea of what they are willing to pay.

Once the business owner has answered these questions, the next step is to locate this "ideal" customer and begin to generate sales leads. This step is easier for some businesses than others.

After you have some potential leads, you need to evaluate them. This includes the customer with whom you must make an appointment and visit, as well as those who walk into your store.

While categorizing leads sounds difficult, it can be very simple. You'll need information about them in five basic areas. That information allows you to rank those leads on a 2-point scale in which 2 means the individual or business has high potential as a customer, 1 means the individual or business has medium potential and zero means the individual or business has little or no potential as a customer for you.

The areas in which you need information are:

- \* Has the potential customer budgeted for the item/service, or does the person have the power to change the budget? Be ready to explain how the product or service can solve problems and save costs.
- \* Does the potential customer have the authority to make the decision to purchase a product or service? If not, can he or she make an introduction to the person who does?
- \* Do potential customers have a defined problem/need or are they just exploring options? You must be able to give the customer a reason to switch to your product or service.
- \* What is the potential customer's time frame: immediate, short term or long term? Can you do anything to accelerate the potential customer's decision to buy a product or service?
- \* What is the potential size of the sale? This question must be considered for immediate sales and the long-term sales potential.

The general consensus is a score of 8 or higher means you have a good lead.

Selling is a key role in business. While marketing can generate the leads, sales bring in the revenue. Marketing requires an investment of money. Sales often require an investment of time

and may be are something that only the owner can handle.. However, other times, the owner may benefit from hiring good sales personnel.

“Good selling means avoiding some basic mistakes,” says Glenn Muske, rural and agribusiness enterprise development specialist for the North Dakota State University Extension Service. “The biggest mistake is simply not selling. Yet a corollary is selling too hard. You also can, by not screening, waste valuable time by try to sell to everyone.”

A good sales process is crucial for long-term business success. Make sure you are tracking your leads and the results. Take time every day to develop the business sales process. If you do not have a sales process in place, make that a priority.

For more information, you can visit NDSU’s small-business support website at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/smallbusiness). You also can contact your local Extension Service office at [insert phone number and e-mail address] or visit [www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship](http://www.eXtension.org/entrepreneurship). Federal and state resources such as the Small Business Administration and Small Business Development Centers also are prepared to help.