

***Editor's Note:** In this month's sales article, author Mark Hunter raises simple yet thought provoking BD questions: What specific obstacles are preventing you from increasing sales? What would happen to your potential if you could increase your list of prospects by 50%? If your obstacles are operational (i.e., you're wearing too many hats), it may be time to re-assess and determine how your organization can optimize the sales function to be better balanced with other needs. Once the pathway to growth is opened up, the notion of increasing prospects by 50% is everyone's dream. The shortcut to making that dream very real is to use the **PharmSource Lead Sheet**. In just 30 minutes each week, you'll quickly identify targeted, fresh leads at exactly the right time — when companies' specific needs are first announced. The **PharmSource Lead Sheet** is the antidote for keeping your pipeline fuller.*

Your Pipeline Could Be Fuller

by Mark Hunter

Keeping your pipeline of prospects full is no easy task. I'm not going to suggest it is. I talk to salespeople all the time and most say that prospecting is their number one source of new business. So if you are like most salespeople, one of your hardest tasks is simultaneously one of your most necessary - keeping your pipeline full. There's no way to slide into loads of profit without some effort - serious effort - on the front end.

To use an analogy, let's think of the athletes. Professional and Olympic athletes train for years for the shot to achieve national and/or international success. For some athletes, their competitions last mere minutes. Even for baseball, football, hockey, soccer and basketball players, their pinnacle moments may take place in games that last only a few hours. What does it take to achieve at such a high level? A tremendous amount of effort on the front end. We don't see the countless hours spent training, preparing, avoiding injury, healing from injury, finding the right coaches, acquiring the right equipment, managing time schedules, and juggling personal lives.

From a sales perspective, closing the sale is the "big event" - that's where the money starts flowing. But getting to that event takes a lot of effort and adjusting along the way. From a prospecting standpoint, consider these questions:

What are the obstacles you face in growing your business?

If you can't identify specific obstacles, you can't begin to find ways to overcome those obstacles. Put it down on paper what is standing between you and more customers.

What percentage of new business comes to you because of referrals from your customers or your network?

Interestingly, some salespeople wait for their customers to give them referrals. It's like waiting for your friends to suggest a good restaurant instead of proactively asking your friends for restaurant recommendations. Start today to make it part of your follow-up process with current customers to ask them for the name of at least one contact or company that may appreciate you as a resource.

Referrals happen when you provide a superior customer experience. Networking is all about developing as many relationships as possible. To refine your networking and referral process even more, find ways to develop relationships with people who are in a position of influence.

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What would happen to your business if you could expand your pipeline by 50%?

Now is the time to start dreaming big, because the more you visualize what business growth could mean for your company and you personally, the more motivated you will become. Start getting specific. Start listing ways that increased profit will benefit your company and you. Then let this motivation carry you to the next step - expanding your list of potential prospects.

What's the best new idea you've come up with in the past year for your business or sales process?

Write down one idea you developed and the positive impact it had once you implemented it. Then start coming up with more ideas to refine your sales process. You may wonder what this has to do with prospecting. The more you can see that ideas - big and small - significantly improve your sales process, the more momentum you gain in wanting to improve and wanting to prospect.

Create Confidence in Others.

Sales is all about conveying a sense of confidence in others. Prospects become customers when they believe in the product, service and/or salesperson. Without a level of confidence, there is no sale. Prospecting can be hard, but the payoff is worth it. Grow your pipeline with the same focus as a committed athlete trains. In the end, the "gold" is worth it.

About the Author

Mark Hunter, "The Sales Hunter," is a sales expert who speaks to thousands each year on how to increase their sales profitability. For more information, to receive a free weekly email sales tip, or to read his Sales Motivation Blog, visit www.TheSalesHunter.com. You can also follow him on www.Twitter.com (TheSalesHunter).

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