

Business Development Session 4 - Building a Customer Base using the Mail, Databases, E-mail, and Word-Of-Mouth

Building a Customer Base

Most people know at least 100 people. You would not think you know that many people in your close circle of friends, family, clients, and colleagues, but you would probably be surprised if you spend time figuring it out.

The first step to building a customer base is to list all the names of the people you know. It doesn't matter how you know them. They can be friends, family, clients, colleagues, people you know at stores, at post offices, even the UPS driver. Make a list of everyone you know who you can talk to about your business. Don't worry if you think they might not be interested in what you do. Just make the list. The only people who you would not include on your list are babies as they would not understand.

Now that you have your list you need to contact each of the people on this list. Find out their address, phone, fax, and e-mail. Tell them you would like to include them on your mailing list to tell them what you are doing. Find out if it's ok if you contact them with information once your business is ready to promote. Most people will definitely say "yes" as they are curious about what you plan to do.

Once you have your list of people with their contact information, it's time to begin to create your customer base.

The Mail-Databases

Start to think about how you can promote your new business. Do you have a logo? If you do, great. If not, you need to create one. Draw it first by hand and then create it on your computer using Illustrator or PhotoShop. If you don't have these programs on your computer, go to the library or Kinko's. You can use the programs there either for free or for a minimal fee.

Once you have your logo you need to create a newsletter or some form of flier to advertise. Microsoft Word has templates built into the program for newsletters and fliers. Go through the templates and find one that works for you. Save the template and insert your logo. Then begin to write your thoughts down for people to read. When you write a newsletter you need to write it as if you are the customer. What would you want to read in a newsletter? What would entice you to be your customer? What would catch your eye? What would make you call you about your idea? If you need help with this let me know. If you draft up a flier or newsletter and want me to take a look at it, attach it to an e-mail and e-mail it to me at joyful@best.com. I will be happy to give you my critique.

Use Microsoft Works or Microsoft Excel to create a customer database. This is very easy. If you have Microsoft Works I would recommend that one. Create a database that includes the following information:

1. Title
2. First Name
3. Middle Initial (if you think it's necessary)
4. Last Name
5. Company Name
6. Street Address
7. City
8. State
9. Zip Code
10. Country
11. Telephone (office)

12. Telephone (home)
13. Fax
14. E-mail Address
15. Notes (if you think it's necessary)
16. Date you entered the information

Once you have entered this information you will have a database to use and update with contact information. This database will be used to make phone calls, send out fliers and newsletters, and for surveys.

E-mail

Go onto the Web to www.egroups.com. Create a group. Call it whatever you like. You will need to become a member of egroups first. There is no charge to do this. The groups are free and can be used at any time. Once you have created a group you need to set up your group. I recommend that you list the group so the public can see it, keep it open to all registrations, restrict messages so that you approve all messages, and the rest keep as is on the form. Once you've created the list and set up the settings, begin to input the e-mail addresses of everyone you know. Once your list is complete be sure to put the e-mail address to send e-mail to the group in your e-mail address book. Then send a message to the group from your e-mail program. Let everyone know that you have created the group and that they will hear from you from time to time about your new business. Tell them to tell their friends about the free list and that anyone can sign up and take advantage of the free list. Promote the list to everyone you know and think of a way to entice people to tell their friends, family, and colleagues about it. The more people who sign up for your list the better. These are all potential customers for you.

Word-Of-Mouth

The very best advertising is word-of-mouth. People who know you, trust you, and will want to support you in your new business endeavor. Not only do you want to use databases, fliers, newsletters, and e-mail lists, but you also want to have direct contact with people and talk to them about what you do. Go to the stores you generally shop at and talk to the manager. Tell them what you are doing and see if they would want to become involved. Go to places that are related to your business and see if you can fit your business in with what they offer. Word-of-mouth is the very best way to build your business!

CERTIFIED BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COURSE - SESSION 4 – **QUESTION & ANSWERS**

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

FAX: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Please be sure to fill out the information above, complete the test and e-mail or fax it back to us at iridology@netzero.net or 530-878-1119. We will grade your question & answer session and will let you know if we have any questions or concerns.

1. E-mail us your database. This information will be kept confidential and will not be used or shared. If you are uncomfortable sending us addresses and telephone numbers, just send us a copy of the database you created with only the first and last names.