

# Actionable Ideas for Businesses

## Session 2



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# Sales



**The essential elements of a 'sale' are competence and mutual benefit. Otherwise, it's just a transaction.**



**Sales is the same as leadership: share your vision, build relationships and provide solutions.**



**When you view 'sales' as simply helping the customer achieve their objectives, everyone in your company is a salesperson.**



**The most important sales call you make is after the order is received, but before it's fulfilled. Say 'thanks' and confirm expectations.**



**At the moment of purchase, your prospect becomes a customer and your relationship changes forever. Be ready for that transition ahead of time.**



Provide your client a project summary, including estimated costs and timing. This will help you judge client intent before developing a full—and often costly—proposal.



In many instances, up-selling works better than cross-selling. It is often easier for the client to upgrade their purchase, while cross selling may be distracting.





## What are the 'up-sell' opportunities available to you?

**If this...**

**Then this...**

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

**Consideration: Are there discount opportunities available to help encourage additional purchases?**



**Lower the cost of acquiring new customers by creating standard, and repeatable, sales processes. Start small, and scale up over time.**



**There are three ways to get referrals —earn them, ask for them, and reward for them. Create and implement a plan for each.**



**Who can you ask for referrals? Identify those customers below.**

Name	Company	Contact Info



**The fewer the decisions, the easier it is for a prospect to make a purchase. Limit the number of decisions involved in a sale.**



**Prospects say 'no' for specific reasons: no need, no money, no urgency or no trust. Be ready to provide a solution for each.**



**Many customer objections can be overcome simply by being prepared ahead of time.**

<b>Their objection:</b>	<b>Your response:</b>
<b>No Need</b>	
<b>No Money</b>	
<b>No Urgency</b>	
<b>No Trust</b>	

# Marketing



**Marketing helps you build awareness for your company, making it easier to attract —and keep —customers.**



**Creating a marketing plan? Keep in mind the top five lead generation tactics:**

- 1) Email 2) Search Engine Optimization (SEO)**
- 3) Social Media 4) Website Optimization**
- 5) Content Marketing**



**Match your marketing materials to your stage in the sales cycle.**

- Early on, educate.**
- Midway, make the business case.**
- Near the close, offer a specific solution.**



**List your current marketing materials/marketing content by stage of the sales cycle; identify any gaps you may have:**

**Educate the customer:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Make business case:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Offer specific solution:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_





**People buy based on emotion. To make the sale, create an emotional connection with the customer.**



**“What’s in it for me?” That’s what customers want to know about your business, so make sure your marketing messages focus on benefits rather than features.**



**Many companies promote the features of their products or services, but often don't explain the benefits of each. What are the benefits your customers ultimately receive?**

**Feature:**

**Benefit:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**Make news with your press release. Explain who, what, where, when and why; link to your website, and 'tell, don't sell.'**



**Spread the word about your business by making friends. Connect with industry journalists on social media, and they'll think of you first when they need a source for a story.**



**Identify journalists or industry influencers with whom a relationship may be important:**

Name	Industry/Media Outlet	Contact info
1. _____		_____ _____
2. _____		_____ _____
3. _____		_____ _____
4. _____		_____ _____
5. _____		_____ _____



**Marketing to the C-suite? Show them how you'll boost their sales and profits, their market value or their competitive advantage.**



**Want new customers? Partner with other small business owners who target the same market, either for a short-term joint promotion or a long-term strategic alliance.**



**Did you know positive online reviews inspire trust in 7 out of 10 consumers?\* Boost your reputation by encouraging customers to review your business online.**

\*BrightLocal: Local Consumer Review study 2015



**Word-of-mouth advertising is key to every business. Get more with superior customer service and by sharing customer stories.**

# Website



**A website is often the window into a company's soul. What do you want others to see?**



**Visitors to your website judge you first on its ease of use; second by its content. Spend your limited website resources first on improving the user experience.**



**Beef up your website's 'About Us' page as it's a great way to introduce yourself. Create your story—who you are and what you believe—with the customer in mind.**





**Your website's 'About Us' page is often the first place visitors will go to. Here are some things to keep in mind while creating your 'About Us' page:**

- **Share your story. How did you get started, and why?**
- **Talk about your customers. What are the challenges they are looking to solve for?**
- **Let your customers talk about you. Include testimonials.**
- **Introduce yourself with pictures. Let customers see who they'll be working with.**
- **Establish your credibility. Include any accreditations you've earned or awards achieved.**
- **Help them get to know you better. Provide easy access to contact information.**
- **Be personal and authentic. Avoid jargon and use language that is easy to understand.**



**Your website should seek to do three things:**

- 1. Add value**
- 2. Collect data**
- 3. Conduct commerce**



**Since many websites today look a lot alike,  
you need to be crystal clear on yours.  
Show your visitors what they should do,  
and how they should do it.**



**Include web content that customers like to come back to often: How-to's, interviews, case studies, research and infographics. Update regularly.**



**80% of online visitors will only read a page's headline or scan the body text. Only 20% will read the page.\* Plan accordingly, and use stronger headlines and sub-heads.**

\*Source: Copyblogger



**Use your social media platforms as a website research arm. For example, use Twitter to test headlines or Facebook and Instagram to test images.**



**Nurturing a prospect online can take time. Get started with a small commitment from them, such as answering a one question survey.**



**Below are a few simple, one-question survey ideas to help you nurture prospects online.**

- ☐ **How often do you visit our website?**
- ☐ **How did you hear about us?**
- ☐ **Overall, how well does our website meet your needs?**
- ☐ **Was it easy to find what you were looking for?**
- ☐ **How likely are you to visit our website again?**
- ☐ **Do you have any suggestions for improving our website?**

**What other questions would you be interested in having answered?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



**For better SEO, add descriptive terms to your site's keywords. For example, use 'New York City consulting firm' not just 'consulting firm.'**



**Website Calls-to-Action: Be direct, be unique, be urgent and use actionable language. But most importantly, be simple.**



**'Actionable language' can encourage website visitors to take the next step. Below are action words you might consider including in your calls-to-action.**

- |                                     |                                      |                                       |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> <b>Start</b>  | <input type="radio"/> <b>Build</b>   | <input type="radio"/> <b>Grow</b>     |
| <input type="radio"/> <b>Join</b>   | <input type="radio"/> <b>Learn</b>   | <input type="radio"/> <b>Discover</b> |
| <input type="radio"/> <b>Want</b>   | <input type="radio"/> <b>Need</b>    | <input type="radio"/> <b>Free</b>     |
| <input type="radio"/> <b>Save</b>   | <input type="radio"/> <b>Try</b>     | <input type="radio"/> <b>Why</b>      |
| <input type="radio"/> <b>Get</b>    | <input type="radio"/> <b>Find</b>    | <input type="radio"/> <b>Now</b>      |
| <input type="radio"/> <b>Today</b>  | <input type="radio"/> <b>Before</b>  | <input type="radio"/> <b>Ends</b>     |
| <input type="radio"/> <b>Create</b> | <input type="radio"/> <b>Contact</b> | <input type="radio"/> <b>Plan</b>     |
| <input type="radio"/> <b>View</b>   | <input type="radio"/> <b>Explore</b> | <input type="radio"/> <b>Buy/Shop</b> |

# Social Media



**Social media is all about engagement.  
Use it to tell the story of who you are.**



## **Social media rules to live by:**

**Be responsive.**

**Be helpful.**

**Be succinct.**

**Be authentic.**



**Seek to build trust first, traffic second. Focus on getting your social media content shared; visits to your website will follow.**





**Tracking social media metrics on a regular basis helps you answer important questions:**

**Is your content engaging? Understand which content gets attention, and which does not.**

- **Likes** —number of people who ‘like’ or ‘favorite’ your post
- **Shares** —number of people who amplify your message by sharing your post with others
- **Comments** —number of times people provide comments and feedback

**Are you reaching the right audience? Pay attention to who is following you and why.**

- **Active followers** —number of followers and friends on any given platform

**Are your social media efforts driving visits to your website?**

- **Clicks** —number of times people ‘click thru’ to your website page via posted URL



**Content creation made easy: Re-format your existing content, such as testimonials, case studies, e-newsletters and blog posts. Soon, you'll have your own content library.**



**Use social media to tell the story of your brand. Make your story memorable (and shareable) by having a hero, a goal, an obstacle, a mentor and a moral.**



**'Story-telling' is a great way to make an emotional connection with your prospects.**

**Hero:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who is the hero of your story? Is it your company? Or is it a customer?**

**Goal:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What did the hero set out to achieve?**

**Obstacle:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What did the hero overcome to achieve the goal?**

**Mentor:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Nothing is done alone. Who helped along the way?**

**Moral:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What greater good (or side benefit) was realized?**



**Social media marketing on a budget: Promoting your blog, making behind-the-scenes videos, and curating content from industry influencers are easy ways to make your mark.**



**Did you know 90% of business-to-business purchases begin with an Internet search.\* Use social media to engage prospects while they are still doing their pre-purchase research.**

\*Source: Forrester Research, Inc.



**Who are influencers in your industry that regularly produce articles and content which you would be willing to share on your social media?**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Media Outlet</b>	<b>Topics Covered</b>
1.	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____

**Note: Consider applicable copyright laws and permission requirements prior to sharing. Always acknowledge original source when re-posting.**



**Use the 80/20 social media ratio: 80 percent of your social media content should be educational and engaging. Only 20 percent should directly promote your business.**



**Intimidated by all the social media options? Start where most of your customers are. If you sell to consumers, that's Facebook, if you sell to businesses, try LinkedIn. If your business is visual, try Pinterest.**



**Engage the prospect in the conversation they are already having, not the one you want them to have.**



**Reward your most engaged social media followers. Offer discounts or coupons, invite them to special events or ask for their input on customer engagement.**



# Productivity



**Being more productive means doing all the things you have to do more efficiently.**



**Are your processes streamlined? To find out, try reversing the process (working backwards) to identify any constraints: then either eliminate them, or create a work-around.**



**Does your business measure up? Measure your productivity against industry benchmarks to see how you compare to the competition and where you can improve.**



One measure of productivity is 'cost of goods sold' (COGS). How does your company compare to your industry's average?

Industry	COGS	Industry	COGS
Accommodation	38.88%	Information	23.48%
Administrative	41.12%	Management	1.13%
Agriculture	54.28%	Manufacturing	71.96%
Entertainment	16.03%	Professional	31.10%
Construction	73.62%	Real Estate	13.31%
Education	11.12%	Retail	73.50%
Finance	57.32%	Transportation	32.23%
Health	9.23%	Wholesale	77.60%

**COGS represents only direct costs (materials and labor) attributable to the production of goods sold. It excludes all other indirect expenses.**

Source: BizMiner 2016 Industry Financials



**Know your 'flow': Energy levels fluctuate throughout the day. Understand yours, and plan tasks accordingly.**



**Is that task 'important' or just 'urgent'? Know the difference and make sure you set aside time each week to work on the important stuff.**



**Get over the hump. Start each project by pinpointing possible problems. Then tackle them head-on so you don't get stalled later.**



**Overwhelmed with work? Don't have a breakdown. Instead, break down big projects into small, manageable steps to build momentum.**



**Leave your employees to their own devices.**  
**A BYOD (bring your own device) approach to technology boosts productivity by letting your team use the tech tools they prefer.**



**Want to boost your personal productivity —fast?**  
**Identify low-value, recurring tasks and either drop them, delegate them or outsource them.**



**What are your recurring, low value tasks and how should they be handled moving forward. (Note: Also see page 17)**

Task	Drop?	Delegate?	Outsource?
1. _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**A similar approach to increasing productivity can be found in the concept of ‘Start, Stop, Continue.’ Similar to above, identify the tasks you or your team will start doing, stop doing, or continue doing.**



**So your workload is bigger than your budget?  
Hiring employees isn't the only solution.  
Try outsourcing to temporary employees,  
independent contractors or freelancers.**



**Should you ever say “No” to a customer?  
Yes—if you're too overloaded to do a good job,  
or if taking the job will move your business  
backwards instead of forwards.**





**While it is often difficult to tell a customer 'No', there may be specific reasons why you might. Identify those reasons below and note any options you might offer instead.**

**Reason #1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Option:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason #2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Option:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason #3:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Option:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Share this list with others on your team so they are comfortable with making 'no' decisions on their own.**

# Continuous Improvement



Continuous improvement is both a process and a mindset. When executed well, the former leads to the latter.



**Process improvement cannot happen from the top down. Empower employees closest to the problem to find the root cause and implement modifications.**



**Standardize and document all your processes (what, who, when and how) to establish predictable outcomes. This helps limit variations, and sets a baseline for future improvement.**



**Documenting and standardizing your internal processes is an important part of a continuous improvement mindset. While every company will document their processes differently, most will include similar information:**

- **Sequence: What happens when, and in what order.**
- **Task: Detailed description of task and actions taken.**
- **Systems: Identification of system requirements.**
- **Time: Estimated time for task completion.**
- **Dependencies: Outside factors to be considered.**
- **Responsibilities: Responsible party for each task.**
- **Key points: Important items responsible party needs to know.**
- **Confirmation: Confirmed defined process is correct.**
- **Revisions: Documented history of changes to process.**



**Interruptions to workflow often happen when there is no simple, direct 'path.' Limiting the number of hand-offs can help create a clear line-of-sight.**



**Map out your internal processes with the customer's experience in mind. Identify (and quantify if possible) the value the customer receives at every point.**

**Use space below to sketch out your customers' experience.**  
**Use standard flow chart icons to diagram their process.**



**Standard  
Icons**



**Start/End**



**Process**



**Decision**



**Document**



**Go see your many processes first hand. Learn by putting yourself in the middle of the action — listen in on customer calls, walk the shop floor or have lunch in the break room.**



**Test any new process by piloting it on a small scale. Running an experiment can help minimize your exposure while you ‘fail fast’ and work out the kinks.**



**Use the “5S” concept for better organization: Sort, Set in Order, Shine (keep clean), Standardize and Sustain. This helps eliminate clutter and makes things more accessible.**



**‘Visual management’ can help the team see how, and where, their processes fit in. Post your goals, and progress in meeting key metrics, in common spaces around the company.**





**Obstacles arise when process connections between two or more people are not clearly defined. Hand-offs and accountabilities should be explicit and direct, with no ambiguity.**



**Start each day with a team “huddle” to identify and address any issues from the day before. Huddles are also a great venue for motivating and recognizing team members.**



**Visualization helps engage team members during huddles. A simple white board (that can be updated regularly) can help everyone focus on the most important items. Below is one ‘huddle board’ suggestion; yours should be customized to meet your needs.**

**Announcements**

**Team  
schedules/  
Out-of-Office**

**Recognition**

**Resolved  
issues  
Recent wins**

**Un-Resolved  
Issues  
Ideas/Suggestions**

**Events/Issues  
On the  
Horizon**

# Data Analysis



**Understanding the data you already have can help you make better decisions.**



**You cannot improve what you cannot measure.  
Understand what data any given process  
is generating, and capture that data at  
regular intervals.**



**Be specific when setting data analysis goals.  
A narrowly defined goal can provide you clearer,  
more meaningful metrics that are easier to track  
over time.**



**Many of your data analysis goals will be focused on your company's key performance indicators (KPIs), such as sales generated or customer acquisition costs. Use the space below to identify your KPIs and data needs.**

**KPI:**

**Data needed to track:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**Take care to document where your input came from, and how your outcomes were achieved. Detailed documentation is critical for future confirmation and replication.**



**Be diligent when collecting data to ensure it is as accurate, and as comprehensive, as possible. Cutting corners with your data only gets you one thing: "garbage in, garbage out."**



**The volume of statistical data being generated each day is enormous. However, much of the data you might ever need may already be available to you.**

#### **Internal customer data**

- ☐ **Surveys**
- ☐ **Profiles**
- ☐ **Primary research**

#### **Internal transaction data**

- ☐ **Invoices**
- ☐ **Statements**
- ☐ **Payments**

#### **Internal technology data**

- ☐ **CRM software**
- ☐ **Website/Social Media**
- ☐ **Business apps**

#### **External public data**

- ☐ **US Census**
- ☐ **Data.gov**
- ☐ **Secondary research reports**



**‘Sample size’ rule of thumb: The bigger the change, the smaller the sample size needs to be. The smaller the change, the bigger the sample size that is required.**



**Large amounts of data does not always mean you need expensive software. Also, consider data maturity, data source, and your goals. Often times, a simple spreadsheet may fit the bill.**





**When using a simple spreadsheet program for data analysis, you may find the following functions helpful.**

### **Tables**

**Ease organization and management by grouping similar data together.**

### **Sort & Filter**

**Sort data into a specific arrangements; filter data to isolate key information.**

### **Pivot Tables**

**Automatically summarize selected data to generate specific reports or table views.**

### **Data Cleaning**

**Remove inaccurate, missing or unnecessary data prior to analysis.**



**A single word can make all the difference. Simple A/B testing can be used to evaluate if a perceived change in behavior has, in fact, occurred.**



**Correlation does not equal causation.  
Our preconceptions might lead us to believe one action causes another when the true relationship is far more complex.**



**Partner with local colleges for your data analysis needs. Many students are knowledgeable, eager and often have free time. They may also have access to data sets that you do not.**



**Data visualization is critical to understanding relationships. Use bar charts instead of pie charts to compare values (the human eye has trouble comparing areas of slices).**

# Customer Service



**Customer service is the most direct way to solve customer problems. When done well, it is also a competitive advantage.**



**You can better serve your customers when you educate yourself on their business, their industry and their competitors. Share that knowledge with your entire team.**



**Give your customer service team a philosophy instead of a script. This will help them be more efficient and personable when interacting with customers.**



**Our customer service philosophy is:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Customer service is most effective when team members have quick access to customer data and can anticipate the customer's desired outcome.**



**Be proactive in getting customer feedback.  
Reach out to your customers first, before they have a problem.**



**No customer complaint should be viewed in a vacuum. Track every complaint, get additional feedback when you can, and identify trends.**



**Social media is critical for customer service. Monitor, engage and respond quickly. It's important that customers know they have been heard.**





The buyer's journey is no longer guided. Create positive experiences for whatever journey they choose to take.



First to touch rule: The moment someone becomes aware of a customer complaint, that person is responsible for keeping that customer satisfied. Avoid the run around.



**Help your customers look good online: Share their content, promote their events and recommend them.**



**The most critical ability your customer service team needs is the power to fix issues.**

# Community Engagement



**As a vital member of the community,  
you are in a unique position to  
contribute to the greater good.**



**Align company's 'giving' strategies with its mission. Make a greater impact by contributing time and resources to local organizations that share your goals.**



**When your business is up-front about how it engages with the community, requests for support that fall outside of your stated mission are easier to respectfully decline.**



**When identifying potential organizations to include in your community engagement plans, start by considering what the organization's overall approach is.**

#### **Relief**

**Organizations that provide direct relief to those in need. These may include food pantries, shelters and the like.**

#### **Improvement**

**Organizations that seek to improve people's circumstances. These may include health, housing, or employment.**

#### **Reform**

**Organizations that encourage change, especially as it relates to social issues.**

#### **Response**

**Organizations, either permanent or temporary, that respond to specific events such as natural disasters.**



**Look beyond ‘one-and-done’ volunteer opportunities. Instead, seek ongoing engagements that can provide a transformative experience for all involved.**



**Match your community engagement plans with employee skill sets (or lack thereof). Use volunteer opportunities to hone existing employee skills or to create new ones.**



**Skills your team can share:**

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**Skills your team needs to develop:**

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**Your company's written business policies need not be limited to processes. Consider including policies that can help align business strategies with community goals.**



**Consider your customer's values in your philanthropic initiatives. Partnering with customers in community -based programs helps build stronger business relationships.**





**Which customers could you work with on joint philanthropic or volunteer initiatives?**

**Customer**

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**Community opportunity**

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**Date a community organization before you marry them. Get to know each other first — through smaller initiatives —to confirm that your values and interests are in sync.**



**You do not need a lot of money to build relationships within your community. Non-monetary efforts, such as promoting employee time off to volunteer, can help create goodwill.**



**Report volunteerism in terms of dollars and cents. Expressing hours volunteered in monetary values helps highlight the company's efforts as a tangible investment.**



**Having employees who are involved in the community —with your support —are often happier, more engaged at work, and less likely to leave.**

# **Let's Get to Work On Your Business.**

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