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Q&A

CORPORATE COACH ACADEMY

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ASSESSING YOUR SUITABILITY FOR A SALES CAREER

Question: *I run a travel agency that is barely surviving; making just enough to pay for salaries and expenses, and with some luck, maybe a small balance for some saving. We do a lot of activities to get sales, such as taking part in travel fairs, doing road shows, making cold calls, mail blasting and getting recommendations from friends. Despite all these, we still find it tough to get a good steady stream of new customers to patronise our business.*

I don't know what else to do to get them. Can you help? - Blank

Answer: Honestly, you have done all you need to do but it seems to me that they are mostly "touch-and-go" activities with no central focus nor a system around any of them. Doing it this way will only skim the surface of the marketplace without really giving you any solid results.

Also, I notice that every one of you is directed at getting new customers, which can be very costly. How about tapping on your base of customers to help you get new ones? Probably this is an area you should put focus on in a serious way.

Bottom Line: A good referral system is probably what you need as it costs much less, and when done well, can churn you lots of customers.

I like to propose a referral system that might give you some ideas on how you can make it better for your company.

Start from the time your customers sign up for their travel; for example, getting them to indicate in the booking form (or somewhere else) who else they know would be travelling or would be travelling in the near future.

The evaluation form, which is given to them at the end of their travel is yet another important factor. Here, they can put in names and contacts of their friends.

Sending birthday cards on their birthdays and anniversaries is very powerful as they will be moved by your personal touch, and in turn, they will remember you when they or their friends want to travel.

You can even do a campaign where you write to them for recommendations with a special discount voucher attached to it. There are so many ways. So start thinking of others for a strong referral system in your company.

Powerful Questions:

- Which sales referral activities can tap on your resources with great ease in implementation?
- What does this require you to do?
- Who in the organisation will be put in charge of this?
- How can you ensure success and sustainability in it?

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GETTING STEADY FLOW OF REFERRALS

Question: *Asking my customers for referrals is really difficult for me. So, either I sheepishly mention it to them at the end of a transaction, like "Do you have anyone to introduce to me?", or I don't mention it at all while hoping that they will do it for me.*

Although I get some leads from them, they are not enough to keep me occupied for a full day activities. How can you help me to be more confident to get referrals? - Fearful

Answer: It is normal not to ask customers for referrals early as most of us want them to experience our services first before they "stick their necks out" to recommend someone to us. In this respect, you are heading the same way like many of us.

However, when our customers are happy with our service, they usually share the good news with others. They will then call us up and usually mention that so and so have referred them to us. So, you don't have to worry about not asking for referrals. What is very important is to provide your customers with the best service. Leave the rest to fate, so to speak.

Bottom Line: There are other good things you can do with your customers. Make good friends out of them so that they will go out of the way to support you. Find a way to keep them, either through a club, association or a loyalty programme so that you can have repeat business or make them remember you when someone asks them for recommendations about similar service or product.

Other things can include giving them a gift, a voucher, a gathering or a networking group of sort. The objective is never to lose them. Just find something to keep them.

Finally, it is also fine to ask a good friend cum customer directly for leads and they will be more than happy to help you.

Powerful Questions:

- How can you ensure exceptional services to your customers always?
- What resources do you have that can be turned into a loyalty programme that can keep your customers with you?
- What activities can you do to bring them close to you?
- How do you communicate all these to them?