



STRATEGIC PLANNING &
IMPLEMENTATION ASSOCIATES, INC.

Affiliate Marketing

Do You Have A Network Of Chickens Working For You?

By
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Which came first – the chicken or the egg. Or to put another way, what does chickens and eggs have to do with business development and building a successful business? A lot – an awful lot!!!!!!!

When we say “chickens”, we’re referring to people who are capable of delivering to you referrals – regularly on an ongoing basis. They “lay a lot of eggs” (referrals). Eggs, as we define it here, are the referral’ees (smile).

Today as the competitive environment grows more intense, having a personal referral from a associate, contemporary or friend of a potential customer can make the big difference between working hard – and – working smart.

I have, over the years, tried it both ways. I was aggressive in the field using sales calls (telephone and direct in-person visits) which resulted in growth but at a tremendous cost in terms of time, energy and cost. I found that, typically, it took upwards of six in-person sales calls to start to make enough of an impression on a prospect to start (?) to get business – probably as a #2 or #3 source for product.

You know the selling scenario – here’s typically what buyers say when you’ve made your pitch --- and are asking for the order (smile):

- First call ending – Thank you for coming in – Its been nice to meet you – I’m very happy with good ol’ George – who’s been taking care of me for years and years. Have a good day!
- Second call ending – Thank you – I didn’t expect to see you again. Most salespeople never come back. I’m still very happy with good ol’ George. But I think you’ll be successful – not many people come back. Have a nice day!
- Third call ending – Well, you’re proving that you have stamina – stick-to-it-ness (smile). I’m still happy with “good ol’ George” but one of these days, I may (?) just try and see what you can do for me. Thanks for coming in.
- Fourth call ending – Persistence is definitely one of your character traits (smile). Well I don’t have anything for you now but who knows, maybe next time. George is taking good care of me. Thanks for coming in. I can see why you’re a very successful salesperson (smile)
- Fifth call ending – Darned it – I guess I’m going to give you a try. Here’s a item that I can’t seem to get from “good ol’ George”. He says he’s backordered on it – and has been for over a month. Do you think you can get it for me?
- Sixth call end – You did it – I have to congratulate you. Not only are you consistent, but you deliver.

While this example may only be representative, a lot of time goes into getting to the sixth call ending above.

Compare that with another scenario – one that typically gets better results FASTER – with less effort:

You attend a Networking Event (properly prepared) and meet/get to know two/three individuals who:

- You're selling business consumables. You have developed a UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION that clearly articulates what you do and why someone would want to do business with your company. This "infamous" 30-second speech needs to be fine-tuned before you venture into the wilds of a networking event (smile).
- You've decided to look for individuals that serve the same business to business companies you call upon e.g. accountants, computer service companies, printers, coffee service companies, water companies – the list goes on-and-on-and-on.
- Your goal is to find people who can refer their clients/customers to you --- offering you the same opportunity to refer your clients/customers.
- You are NOT there to sell anyone. That's the best way to scare a potential "chicken" away. Instead you're there to HELP him/her by suggesting that YOU MAY BE ABLE TO HELP THEM plug into your client/customer base because "we're both calling on the same market".....
- Your only job is to find a good way to get his/her "details" suggesting that maybe sometime soon the two of you can get together to talk about "HOW YOU CAN HELP THEM BUILD THEIR BUSINESS". As you would imagine, it's pretty tough to say no to someone who offers to help you build your business. Right?
- Picking up the phone a day or two after the event, you call this potential "chicken" and invite him/her out for a cup of coffee or a bite to eat. It doesn't have to be a big deal – just an opportunity to meet and get to know each other.
- The meeting takes place (ideally within a week/ten days following the initial networking event). There you strive to establish a relationship based on mutual respect for each other's capabilities and what each company can do for each other's clients/customers.
- Your goal is to determine if there's consensus that he/she'd be interested in getting referrals from you. YES I SAY "FROM YOU".
- The first thing that you must do is establish that you deliver referrals – and are not parasitic and are asking for but not willing to help the other person out.
- After delivering one/two referrals and checking on them afterwards, you should start to see some referrals coming back to you – just as a part of the building relationship.
- If the person you're dealing with doesn't deliver, sometimes one has to be "up-front" and ask the loaded question (smile) – "Do you think there might be one or two of your clients/customers that would benefit from doing business with me and my company?" If it's done properly with the right body language and attitude, you should see referrals coming in.
- If nothing happens after 60 days, figure your network "chicken" is a parasitic chicken and one that probably never will deliver. Drop him/her immediately and go out and find some more tasty chickens... There are lots out there.

What can a chicken do for you? For Planned Growth, we find that over 50% of our new clients come from "chickens" referring companies to us.

My clients which include a number of business products dealers and distributors in many other fields find, when they utilize this approach, that the percentage is even higher. One of my associates from another company, Jay Wallus, when he sold for an office equipment dealership in Massachusetts, found that he received no less than 5 referrals per day – sometimes 7 – each day, every day. That's maybe why he sold \$2.8 million in business equipment vs. the industry average for independent dealer business development professionals < \$750k.

Jay made it a point to keep the relationship a two-way-street – making sure that each chicken received as close to the same number of referrals as was received by him. Thus there was a strong sense that a "partnership" existed – with each side getting important benefits from the process.

What would have a large network of "CHICKENS" do for you? Could it help you build your business? You bet your sweet life it would.

It's not hard – it does take time and a commitment to make the relationship a win-win for both sides.

If you're interested in learning more, contact Craig Stimmel by phone @ (978) 640-0803 email @ cstimmel@spiainc.com – or visit us at our website where there are numerous articles including a WHITE PAPER which will provide you a great deal more information on how to build your CHICKEN HOUSE (smile).