



STRATEGIC PLANNING &  
IMPLEMENTATION ASSOCIATES, INC.

## **Are your margins not what they used to be? Maybe this can help...**

By  
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You could be the best financial planner out there - the answer to someone's prayers by "running the numbers" and showing them how to invest more for their child's education. You could be the smartest realtor and be able to help people through a difficult time in their lives - like purchasing a new home and selling the old one for example. However, if you're perceived as just another salesperson, any future client won't pay much attention to you – not good – to say the least.

What happened to real salespeople?

I'm not talking about pushy, fast talking, full of it, smooth talking creeps – but real salespeople – people who love what they do and add a lot of value to it. I just don't see them anymore. Most of the salespeople that I meet are in the commodity business – complaining how their clients can shop their prices/services/rates on the internet. I constantly hear "I just can't make the margins I used to" or "back in the hay day you could make money". To these things I respond, "What have you done to add any value to your product/service so that people aren't so price sensitive?". You can just imagine what those blank stares looked like (smile). Do yourself a favor – if you're in the commodity business - get out!

I'm currently working with a client who is in the promotional products business – the industry of people who sell imprinted give away items such as pens, mugs, hats etc. The first thing I recognized was that these products can very easily be shopped. Now to raise the margins would require bringing in added value to the clients. I'll share with you one of the "Street Smart" ways that we're going to do that.

- Step 1: We're going to pick an industry (any industry, it doesn't matter) where many mediocre salespeople call and try to sell products. Their sales pitches usually start with something like "I have a great catalog with 90 million items that I'd love to stop by and talk with you about. Is Tuesday at 11:00 or Wednesday at 3:00 better for you?". You laugh, but I guarantee this happens a lot more than you could ever possibly imagine.
- Step 2: We're going to get a mailing list of the decision makers in this industry – not the person who answers the phone, but the decision makers. Any list that you could ever possibly imagine is readily available through the hundreds of local list brokers.
- Step 3: We're going to write a letter to that decision maker to help them solve an age old problem something their current mediocre salesperson never does - all they do is sell them more mugs (smile). What's the problem you ask? I'll tell you. Many of these items are given away by companies with the idea of "getting the company name out there". I'm not sure about you, but I NEVER decided to do business with someone because their name was on a pen – did you?

- Step 4: We're going to create a coupon and insert it into that letter that entitles the decision maker to send to us their last promotional product and what goal they were trying to accomplish with that product. We will then take the product and the goal and set up a phone appointment to show the decision maker 2 brand-new processes to accomplish their goal. Free of charge – added value – get it? Notice I said processes? These processes will show the client a system to follow to sell more of their product/service - as well as a way to directly measure the success of the promotion. I promise you that it won't have much to do with the exact product either.
- Step 5: By doing my research, I found out through the Direct Marketing Association that mail that is "bulky" gets opened at a rate of 5.49% vs. 2.73% - TWICE AS MUCH. So take a guess what were going to do with all of the letters that go out? You guessed it – put anything in there to make it bulky – it doesn't really matter – as long as it isn't flat and look like all of the other letters. It's simple human nature. We all love getting gifts. Add a little curiosity and it's no wonder the package gets opened.
- Step 6: When we get the promotional products back in the mail – we'll spend some time coming up with the ideas for the promotion. Yes – actually spend time thinking (smile). We'll then call the decision maker back to schedule time to share our ideas with them.

Now - be honest - if you're in business and you were approached by 2 different salespeople, one saying they wanted to show you a catalog and one wanted to show you 2 new ways for you to make money – who would you go with?

For those of you who would like to learn a little more about how I might be able to help you and your company drastically improve your sales by applying some very simple strategies, please email me at [cstimmel@spiainc.com](mailto:cstimmel@spiainc.com) and we can set up a brief phone appointment. (I apologize but because of my time limitations I can only spend 15 minutes on any one call).