

11 WAYS TO



DOUBLE



**YOUR CUSTOMER BASE
IN 4 WEEKS**

ActionCOACH[®]
BUSINESS COACHING

11 Ways to Double Your Customer Base in 4 Weeks

Double your volume of business within a single month by following these simple but highly effective steps. They will be sure to generate new leads and successfully convert them into paying customers.

Building a truly successful business requires a keen understanding of the needs and desires of your market. In all cases, this ultimately traces to your customers' wants and needs. By connecting to the people who want your products and services and directly appealing to them, businesses gain new customers and clients. A common problem faced by many entrepreneurs is that they either fail to define their potential customers or they lack the skills, resources, and strategies necessary to forge valuable relationships with them. Self-promotion is essential, and a focused and effective marketing plan to advertise your business can easily double your customer base within four weeks. By following a few simple tips and engaging in some time-tested initiatives, the process can be both easy and lucrative.

Here are eleven tried and true methods for adding new customers in record time.



#1 Build a Loyalty Ladder to Create "Raving Fans"

Loyal customers are ideal customers. These are the people who sometimes refer others to your business, which makes them especially valuable because they serve as a free form of advertisement. Your most prized clients and customers are those who become so energized about the level of service they receive that they cannot stop telling others about it. These "raving fans" are a golden asset, and are a tremendous source of new customers. If a business makes a concerted effort to identify loyal customers and earn their highest praises, they will almost certainly become cheerleaders for your business. This is an investment that pays off many times over, and it costs much less than traditional forms of marketing.

For a company to rise to this level of appeal, they must make an intentional, targeted effort to personalize each transaction and aspect of the customer relationship. For instance, rather than offering a preferred customer a standard discount coupon, a business owner might instead offer them tickets to a golf tournament or symphony. Instead of giving out a free item on their birthday, deliver flowers or a gift basket to them, or pamper them in other special and memorable ways. Your investment in these special services should be calculated based upon the value of the business that raving fans bring to the company. Put another way, customer service is transformed so that it becomes an incentive and rewards program tailored to individual clients. When other potential raving fans witness this kind of VIP treatment, they will similarly become inspired to tell others about the business in order to enjoy the exclusive benefits of this preferred customer relationship.

#2 Identify a Target Market for Direct Mail

Direct mail campaigns work best for reaching consumer demographics that are defined and identified as a focus group. Unlike broad methods of advertising that hit everyone within a given geographic area, direct mail is intended to arrive at the

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doorstep of consumers who are already known to be great candidates for your offered products and services. There are a number of ways to narrow down your target demographics: age, gender, income level, buying habits, and place of residence are commonly examined.

Mailing lists of people who meet specific criteria can usually be purchased for a premium from direct mail companies, clubs and organizations, and survey companies. You'll want to go through brokers who make money by collecting and sharing demographic data. But the least expensive (and often most effective) way to generate an appropriate mailing list is to hold a giveaway contest. People who submit their mailing address on an entry form are obviously interested in winning that product or service, so this helps to pre-screen them as potential customers.

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#3 Create a Referral Program

Design a referral program that rewards customers for bringing others into the customer base. Referral rewards can be in the form of discounts, gifts, invitations to special events, or exclusive "closed door" sales events. A closed door sales event can have a particularly strong appeal with customers who desire a feeling of exclusivity.

A referral program can borrow ideas and schemes from the raving fan concept, but it will be executed in a simpler and more general fashion. Many customers have friends, coworkers, and family members who require the same products and services, so referrals are a natural method of growing your customer base. By using existing customers as a resource for community outreach, you can easily turn one customer into five.

#4 Weed Out Bad Clients and Cater to the Best

Contrary to popular belief, it is sometimes advantageous to lose customers, especially if the business owner deliberately orchestrates the loss. By prioritizing the kinds of customers a business prefers to have, it makes it possible to eliminate those who create unnecessary headaches and detract from your overall bottom line. This allows you to better serve other, more valuable customers. Furthermore, it also allows a company to focus on attracting the kinds of desirable customers that contribute to most of their profits. Shedding those who are a liability – the five or ten percent of people who can never be satisfied – is actually a net positive in the long run.

Identify who the best customers are by applying the "80-20" rule. This principle states that 80 percent of a company's business comes from 20 percent of its customers. Treat those 20% of customers particularly well, and invest extra energy in satisfying their needs while extending service above and beyond the call of duty. They form the core of the business' customer base, and by appealing to them it is possible to create more customers who are similarly lucrative. As the saying goes, birds of a feather flock together. The needs of the best customers will always be the same as the needs of the best potential customers the organization is trying to attract. Learn to cater to those needs and those kinds of clients, and you'll watch your bottom line swell in size.

#5 Create Strategic Business Alliances

By partnering with other businesses with which there is a common customer demographic but no actual direct competition, a company can expand its customer base quickly and easily. Customers who trust other businesses and have proven their loyalty to them will be inclined to follow their recommendations or perceived endorsements of an alliance partner. This is why corporate sponsorships of major events like auto races and concerts are so common.

Locate businesses that share the same philosophy, style, and corporate culture as your own. An upscale Realtor partnering with a refined home decorating gallery makes sense, whereas an alliance between a luxury boat dealership and a payday check cashing store is unlikely to benefit anyone involved.

By creating good alliances, it is possible to come up with all sorts of creative campaigns to increase both business' customer bases. Advertise jointly, throw a party or event together, team up to support local charities, or give preferential treatment to customers who also do business with strategic partners. Alliances are a form of networking that share the common goal of growing each other's customer base, because two heads are often better than one. A professional image consultant might team up with a business offering similar luxuries: a clothing boutique, a spa, a luxury automotive dealership, a catering company, and a travel agency are common choices. Nobody in that scenario is in direct competition with each other, but they are all fueling each other's customer base with pre-qualified and pre-screened leads. It is win-win for both the businesses and their shared clientele.

#6 Use Radio, TV, and Newspaper Advertising

Getting word out through mass media is often the only thing necessary to vastly increase your number of customers. Unfortunately, many businesses devalue this kind of effort because they are not willing to pay for advertising, or they don't understand how it can help. Consulting with local media outlets is sometimes an enlightening process, because those organizations thrive on their understanding of demographic advertising. While a business owner may not see the overall picture, an advertising rep from a local radio station will. They can help to design and implement a successful advertising campaign tailored and pinpointed to the right people. And if the ads succeed, the media organization fails, not you. Consequently, they have a vested interest in ensuring success.

For businesses on a tight budget, classified ads in local newspapers are an easy way to enter the local market. There are also many neighborhood papers to choose from; professional newsletters, trade journals, and other publications that offer strategically targeted ad opportunities are effective choices. Another affordable but effective tactic is to use press releases. Restaurants might announce changes to their menus, car dealerships might notify the press about new models about to be unveiled, and law firms might announce the promotion of an employee or the opening of a new satellite office.

#7 Train and Support Employees to Improve their Skills

Employees feel valued when business owners invest in them to help them further their futures and enhance their careers and skills. As a result, they develop a sense of ownership and responsibility that can boost a business's customer base dramatically. Employees come in contact with people every day, both inside the place of business and elsewhere. Anybody who walks through your doors is a potential customer, but it takes a certain level of professional skill to convert them into a raving fan. Alternatively, an employee might attend a church or school, where there are dozens of potential customers. By helping that employee learn the skills needed to promote your business to those people, it is possible to capture the people that have not heard of you previously.

Employees often profit from attending sales or marketing workshops, for instance. Representatives for major wineries often travel to Europe to learn more about wines, at the company's expense. Hair salons send stylists to conventions to learn new tricks of the trade. Construction companies send carpenters and electricians to night school to get advanced certifications. These investments all pay off when those employees return and land lucrative new accounts, do a better job, or are able to charge customers a higher rate for more specialized service. Invest in those who are already within the business, and it will pay off by bringing new customers from outside the business.

#8 Improve the Conversion Rate for Leads and Contacts

Keeping tabs on leads or sending contacts costly mailings can be a drain, not an asset. As leads and contacts are made, they need to be converted as soon as possible into customers. Otherwise, they can simply become a nuisance and a labor-intensive list of names. Once someone becomes a "lukewarm lead", it is important to warm them up so that they become a hot prospect and then a loyal customer. When someone walks into a party and doesn't know anyone, they are inclined to turn around and leave. But a good host or hostess knows how to spot them, introduce them, show them around, and help them enjoy themselves. The same holds true for businesses that are converting strangers into loyal customers.

Conversion requires getting to know the person, understanding their wants and needs, and then fulfilling those needs in a way that is mutually beneficial for both parties involved. There are many effective conversion strategies and techniques, and they can be systematically executed upon the introduction to a new client or customer. That way, they are automatically cultivated and nurtured to become a paying client. If the current conversion rate is 20 percent for every 100 contacts or leads, you can easily improve that to 40 new customers a month. Boosting conversions to 30 percent represents a 50 percent increase. Convert 40 percent instead of 20 percent, and your customer base has effectively doubled without doing any extra marketing or advertising.

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#9 Convert a Single Customer into Multiple Customers

One of the easiest ways to increase the number of customers is to concentrate on those already in your database. This kind of conversion is often just as lucrative – but far less expensive – than trying to drum up business from cold-calling complete strangers. For example, by up-selling or cross-selling different goods and services, profits can very easily be increased with little effort. Sell a customer a premium version of the standard item they are already buying, and it turns a mediocre customer into a top-tier one. Introduce them to other products in the lineup, or convince them to purchase other services, and it is just as good as landing a new customer.

For customers who are on a limited budget or have other considerations that may be keeping them away, try a down-selling approach. If they can buy a less expensive item instead of leaving to buy from a competitor, you have essentially obtained a brand new customer. Eventually – thanks to the savings they enjoy by doing business at a price point that is within their means – they may upgrade or expand their purchases to become a more valuable customer over time.

#10 Go Online and Drive Traffic to the Brick and Mortar Location

Create a web site that offers everything your brick-and-mortar store does, and it will act as a customer magnet that never sleeps. Furthermore, it will give your business a presence that extends around the entire world almost overhead-free. Give site visitors something valuable in exchange for them providing more information about themselves. Concentrate on getting contact info or a commitment to pay a visit in person to an offline storefront or place of business. If they sign up on the site or visit the store, for example, reward them with a discount, contest entry, or a free consultation or service upgrade.

Make incentives irresistible and continue to emphasize a call to action, otherwise internet surfers will never convert into useful leads and real customers. But also remember to keep it simple so visitors are not intimidated or tired out by the process. Rather than asking for extensive amounts of information, just get mail and email addresses so that follow-ups can be done at a different time.

If you attract 10,000 visitors to your website per month and convert only one percent of them, that will add up to 1,200 new customers per year. Convert ten percent of them, and 1,000 new customers will show up within the first four weeks – an astonishing result that is entirely plausible and achievable

#11 Increase Visible Exposure

Brand recognition is powerful, and we live in a visual world of shapes and colors that are constantly competing for our attention. Capitalize on visible exposure at every possible opportunity, and it will soon increase your customer base while strengthening recognition of your brand. Don't use generic shopping bags when it is possible to put a business logo and tagline on them. Give away beverage coasters, key chains, and coffee mugs that double as promotional items. Put up signs, buy uniforms with logos on them, or paint delivery vehicles with advertising messages. Look for every chance to come out

from the shadows and be seen, because the more a business is seen by potential clients, the greater the chance for that business to double its customer base in a short period of time.

Following Up to Take Full Advantage of Marketing Momentum

Once a business manages to recruit customers, it is important to maintain consistency through ongoing marketing campaigns that strengthen the relationship, expand upon it, and further respond to the wants and needs of those customers. The investments required to find, identify, and attract new customers are much greater than the energy and effort required to retain an existing customer who will reward the business with loyalty, referrals, and greater profits over multiple transactions. Neglecting to follow through and preserve “top-of-the-mind awareness” is a common mistake made by business owners, and it can prove to be costly. Even the largest and most recognized brands in the world continue to run successful advertising campaigns designed to keep existing customers and add new ones to their database.

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Once a customer shifts brand loyalties, it is twice as hard to win them back. Not only does the business have to compete with general market forces, it has to contend with the specific strength of that new bond and relationship with the competitor. Breaking that bond of loyalty and luring them back can be either an uphill battle or a losing proposition, so it is imperative that the end of the initial four-week strategy be viewed as the beginning of a lifelong relationship.

Most importantly – since profit is the ultimate goal and should always be the primary benchmark – recognize that vibrant relationships with customers are dynamic and symbiotic. Every customer a business counts as its own actually represents the potential of many other customers and customer transactions. Good customers are the best advertising, and they can also contribute many times over to your bottom line through increased frequency of transactions, higher average dollar amounts on sales, greater total revenues and margins, and higher net profits.

Crunching the Numbers and Banking the Profits

At the final stage of the game, testing and measuring takes on a hugely significant role. Just as tests and measurements helped to identify successful marketing tactics, they also help to provide a quantifiable snapshot of results after the first month-long push to double customer counts.

Five main areas of the business should be explored and monitored:

1. The number of leads generated by the four-week campaign.
2. The conversion rate that shows what percentage of leads converted into actual buying customers.
3. The number of transactions completed by each of those new customers.
4. The average dollar amount of each sales transaction.
5. The profit margins generated as a result of the four-week initiative.

To plug-in data and complete the formula, simply track new leads throughout the month by adding them to your business' database. The number of fresh leads gained over four weeks can be averaged out and then multiplied by 50 working weeks per year. It is also valuable to ask leads how and where they were contacted. This data is needed in order to identify them demographically and weed-out ineffective lead-generating strategies.

Only about 20 percent of the ideas or tactics in a marketing campaign actually work, but that should not disappoint an entrepreneur who is able to determine which ones work and produce the desired results. Focus on those winning initiatives, and replicate the process again and again. Rather than view it as an 80 percent failure rate, recognize that it is a 20 percent success rate that can be repeated 10 or 12 times a year. That adds up to a 100 percent rate of return in just six months.

Plus, some campaigns work in different periods of time. What did not work this year might work next year or during another cycle of the market or sales season. Make sure to hold on to ideas that, while they may not have generated stellar numbers of customers, did show some promising results by attracting useful leads. Those "runner up" strategies might produce paying customers at a slower rate too, so don't write them off prematurely. Actual conversion rates may continue to evolve over time; it is important to keep leads data for a while and maintain accurate records in order to track slower conversions as they gradually unfold.

Transactions can be calculated by analyzing sales histories, which can then be averaged across a year in order to estimate future projections. The average dollar amount of each transaction is determined by dividing the total sales amount in dollars by the total number of transactions. Margins can be more complicated to figure out, because they will differ from product to product. But because margins ultimately determine profitability, it is worth the effort to identify and track them.

At that point, it is just a matter of comparing income to expenses to determine your overall profits. Divide profits by the overall number of new customers to find out how much the four-week campaign paid off, and to anticipate how much profit will be realized each time a new customer is added.

Putting it All Together for a Refreshed Vision of Possibility

A computerized system tying together sales leads with the point of sale will provide a user-friendly method for reporting whenever one of those leads visits the store and makes a purchase. The number of purchases, the cost of the items bought, and the margins associated with each item or service all figure into net profits – and this provides a way to see how customers contribute to the bottom line, both individually and collectively.

Applications of simple metric formulas and equations will immediately show the growth of customers over time, which is both informative and inspiring to everyone within the business. In addition, these practical and easy to understand numbers simultaneously serve to demonstrate the power and potential for explosive

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profitability. Double the number of new customers within a single month, and chances are that profits will also double.

Celebrate the seemingly miraculous progress, savor it, and learn from it to be energized and motivated as a team. Multiply the one-month effort by a dozen, and everyone will begin to realize their vision of unlimited potential, possibility, performance, and profits. Within just four weeks, a small business thinking small and feeling stagnant can become a visionary business thinking big and reaping incalculable rewards with refreshed momentum, confidence, and tangible equity.