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BUSINESSES CAN EXPAND WITH EXISTING CLIENTS EVEN IN TOUGH ECONOMIC TIMES

Albuquerque, NM – Though times are tough with the economy right now, it's easier and cheaper to keep an existing client than to get a new one. The key to growing revenue streams with existing or past clients is continuing to nurture those valuable relationships, says sales and marketing consultant Lenann McGookey Gardner.

“In today's competitive economy, you can be sure that your competitors are calling your clients. Your past clients may have left you already and you don't know it,” says Gardner, author of *Got Sales? The Complete Guide to Today's Proven Methods for Selling Services*. “If your clients aren't calling you, make it your business to keep in touch with them.”

Gardner recommends contacting clients an absolute minimum of twice a year, preferably more often. Keep contacts warm by phone, email, snail mail, or – if you are located in the same town – in person over coffee, breakfast, or lunch. Some specific tactics for contacting existing or past clients include the following activities.

Forward or snail-mail article clips.

“Keep on the lookout for articles about the client or his or her company. When you see a story, send a link via email with a provocative subject line, or cut the article out and mail it along with a note of congratulations on ‘getting such great press.’ You can also send articles about their industry or new initiatives their competitors are undertaking, as a way of helping to keep them informed,” says Gardner. “If you're snail-mailing your article, hand-write your notes on the article itself, so you will always get the credit for sending it.”

Send news of your company, but personalize it.

“News of new services you offer, or even old services that might be helpful specifically to a past client, is more likely to be read if it comes with a personal note from you. You can do this both in email and snail-mail,” says Gardner. “Never believe your clients know everything you can do. They probably only think of you as doing what they have already purchased from you.”

Enlighten the client without damaging the ego.

Gardner’s work focuses on sharing the latest research about what’s working in sales today, but sometimes she finds ancient advice can be very contemporary. She cites this passage from *Clients for Life* by Andrew Sobel and Jagdish Smith: “Princes like to be helped, but not surpassed. When you counsel someone, you should appear to be reminding him of something he had forgotten, not the light he was unable to see,” according to Baltasar Gracian, a 17th century Jesuit priest and advisor.

“Be careful, when you send information, that you’re saying in effect, ‘Here’s a reminder,’ not, ‘You are so stupid that you’ve forgotten to do this,’” explains Gardner. “Sometimes, you can suggest doing something that you know is likely to be on your client’s To-Do list, offer to take that job and complete it for him, freeing up his time.”

Focus on the human being, not your product.

“When you are reaching out to reconnect with a past client, use your time on the phone to focus on your client’s pain rather than the product or service you are offering. The more you focus on understanding what’s hurting him now, the more you’ll build trust, which is essential if he is to decide to work with you again,” says Gardner.

Lenann McGookey Gardner, a Harvard MBA and a past #1 worldwide sales rep at Xerox, offers keynote speeches on state-of-the-art selling and closing skills and executive and sales coaching for business success. Her book *Got Sales? The Complete Guide to Today’s Proven Methods for Selling Services* is the one guidebook highlighting all the latest research and data on what’s working now in contemporary selling. More information is available at www.YouCanSell.com.