

Planting Interest: A New Approach to Prospecting.

"I believe changing one word could fundamentally improve the way we attract and retain customers."

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Several months ago, I had the chance to attend a presentation with several of our distributors. They told me they had several “prospects” they were excited about. The presentation was fine, but towards the end, the distributor leading the presentation began to lay things on pretty thick. And ultimately, the “prospects” fled like antelope from a lion.

It was hard to watch.

These distributors weren’t at fault. They are, in my opinion, supremely talented. Everything they said throughout the product presentation was fine. None of them had a visible third eyeball, and they all smelled great. So what was the problem?

I believe our industry set these distributors up for failure with the way we discuss potential customers we engage with. In this case, I suggest that we eliminate the word “prospect” from our collective vocabulary.

I know what you’re all thinking: SEMANTICS! And you wouldn’t be wrong. But in this case, I believe changing one word could fundamentally improve the way we attract and retain customers, and here’s why.

Stop me if you’ve seen this before:

Distributor meets a new customer. Distributor proceeds to read something along the lines of a pyramid scheme script from 1990. “You can get in on the ground level,” he might say. Or the classic “I’ve gathered you all here to tell you about…” line delivered to unsuspecting dinner guests. This is how we view prospects or prospecting. We view everyone as someone looking to be sold to. And it doesn’t work.

In 1970 the average person saw about 500 ads a day. Today, we’re exposed to over 5,000. That’s a whole lot. And my point is this: with people being bombarded by free trial offers and “life-changing” and “don’t miss out” opportunities every day, how can we expect different results when we offer more of the same white noise that people are automatically tuning out? The answer is that we can’t... and shouldn’t.

I think we should think of “prospecting” as something more in line with “planting and harvesting.” Here is what I mean.

I grew up around farms and farmers. You quickly learn just how important harvesting is. The concept is simple, but it requires hard work. You find good ground, you plant seeds, and you carefully water and care for them until they become plants ready to harvest.

A farmer wouldn’t throw a few seeds on the ground and come back an hour later looking for tomatoes. But this is essentially how we approach prospecting. We make a sales pitch and then immediately try to “close.” Not only does viewing prospects like this waste our efforts, it goes against basic human psychology. Study after study shows that the minute we feel like we’re being sold to, our brains go into fight or flight mode. Don’t believe me? Head into a Jiffy Lube and see how defensive you get when you’re offered the “premium service”.

Prospecting revolves around pushing a company’s products or services. Harvesting, on the other hand, is all about figuring out what the seed is telling us it needs, and providing that at the proper moment. It is creating interest and letting customers steer the conversation, on their own terms, with their questions.

Recently, I ran across a Facebook post from a distributor. His name is Brandon, and the post was simple: a picture of himself just after a beautiful hike. The caption read,

“Yellowstone was awesome. Keri, thanks for the heads up about hidden falls. It was gorgeous! Couldn’t have done that hike 4 months and 60 lbs ago. That waterfall... stunning!!”

At first glance, this may seem like a run-of-the-mill Facebook post. But when you look through the comments, it’s clear that Brandon is using the world’s biggest advertising platform to plant or harvest. “60 pounds?!! Seriously? Help a brother out!” said one. “What’s your diet and exercise regimen?” wrote another. Brandon’s post, particularly his weight loss, generated interest. His contacts started asking him questions in the comments. And Brandon was more than happy to answer. This led to a very natural conversation about his experience with specific weight loss products. He was able to let his interested friends ask their own questions, which he answered individually. And as a harvester, I’m sure he continued the conversations offline. This wasn’t difficult. This was just Brandon acting naturally with his friends. Best of all, he didn’t come across as a snake oil salesman. Let’s flip the script and imagine that Brandon had done what so many of us do: posted a giant picture of his favorite weight loss product while telling everyone how amazing it is. One is product focused – the other is life focused.

Which, do you think, was more successful? We all inherently know. Because we hate being sold to as well. We just don’t know how to act differently. Brandon did.

This is because Brandon understood the platform (his Facebook page) and the audience of that particular platform (people that had self-selected to “friend” Brandon because they are interested in his life). They hadn’t clicked that “friend” button because they wanted more ads in their lives, they want to hear about **him**. This might be different from a LinkedIn post, or a business page, but he knew why his audience was scrolling through his personal page that day and he gave them what they wanted. And just as importantly, he gave them just enough information to naturally spark questions. He knew that anyone who was interested in weight loss would self-select and be inspired to ask what he was doing, while those who have no interest would simply move along willing to

engage with future posts he made. He didn't try to close or give them all the information upfront, he let them become the person initiating the conversation. And anytime a customer initiates the conversation, the chances of a sale skyrocket.

Harvesting isn't nearly as difficult or confrontational as traditional prospecting. But it takes patience and diligence because seeds grow on their own and at different paces. The key is to foster genuine connections by planting interest that people can respond to in natural setting. As those seeds start to grow, you can invite more questions and follow up. The seeds you plant will automatically tell you what they need to grow.

Another distributor, Mandy, was recently having a conversation with her hairdresser who asked what her holiday plans were. Without missing a beat, Mandy told her that she was taking her family to Disneyland with her extra LifeVantage money. It was a simple question, and more importantly - an authentic answer, which again - sparked additional questions. Mandy didn't have to talk about products, she didn't have to oversell the company, and I'm sure she wasn't thinking about "closing." Mandy was planting seeds while having a genuine conversation with a friend.

So let's get rid of the word, "prospecting." Instead, let's focus on rising above the clutter with more genuine, natural conversations. We'll be more successful, and we might even make some new friends.



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