

BUILDING YOUR BUSINESS by Joanne Victoria (joanne@joannevictoria.com)

It's never too early to start saying thanks to your clients, vendors, and referral sources for what they contribute to your business. Everyone loves to be appreciated and acknowledged, so start now and do so every month.

Keep in contact with your clients and vendors by sending articles you have written or that would be of interest to them. Add a little "How are you?" note to these people and keep the lines of communication open. Include current information about any new value-added products or services, such as a newsletter, or class you will be presenting. Marketing doesn't have to be expensive. You just have to do it. Communication and relationship are the keys to marketing.

Attending numerous networking meetings may be worthwhile, but that strategy doesn't work for everyone because, as someone once told me, the people who love you will always refer business to you. The people who are your advocates or supporters are the ones who require nurturing. Send them an e-mail, e-zine, note, or article at least once a month. Gather your internal and external management teams in an informal meeting such as breakfast or lunch. Advise them of your upcoming plans, get feedback and give acknowledgement for all their support and advice.

Check in with former clients to see how they are doing. Don't be afraid to dispense free information to these people. Generosity is its own reward. If you keep a timer on your desk, you can be sure of keeping the conversation brief as well as focused. Then, send them more information. Follow up in about two weeks and see how the seeds of your generosity have blossomed. Information is available to everyone, through the Web, magazines and newspapers. Only you can provide customized data to your clients that will be appreciated as well as remembered.

Review your brochures, marketing letters, and newsletters in a new light. Does this information speak to your "Ideal Client"? Do you know who your "Ideal Client" is? Reinvent these documents as needed after you have thoroughly defined this client. Give these documents to your management team and get their feedback. Does your collateral speak to what you do? Is the information clear or does it require interpretation? Spend time on this now and review it every ninety days.

If the cost of a new brochure is prohibitive, or if you think your business will be adding more products or services in the near future, create an Information Letter. With this type of document, you can update your advocate group as well as former and potential clients. Again, it's not costly and serves a specific purpose. This letter can include updates on your particular industry or market. You also can advise them of your continuing education and how it will benefit them.

About those referral sources, they deserve a little extra attention. Remember, they thought of you first! Consider seasonal flowers, plants, a book or a special card. You want them to keep remembering you! Nurture all these relationships and your business will grow and glow.

Joanne Victoria offers both one-on-one coaching and MasterMind Group Coaching for continuing success. Joanne can be reached at joanne@joannevictoria.com or (415) 491-1344.

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