

Ten Ways to Increase Your Sales Right Now



By Don Cooper, The Sales Heretic™

You need sales. And you need them now. Here are ten strategies you can implement today and see results as early as tomorrow.

1. Call Your Existing and Past Customers

The easiest people to sell to are people who have already bought from you. They already like you and trust you enough to have done business with you. And yet, too often we forget about them.

Well, now is the time to reconnect with them. See if they need more of what you sell. See if they need something better or different that you also sell. See if they'd like to upgrade from what they bought previously. Don't assume they don't have the money. Despite the economy, a lot of people still have plenty of money to spend. Often, they just need someone to plant the idea in their head.

So invest some time getting reacquainted with your customers. Call them on the phone, stop by their office, take them out for lunch or coffee. Send them a gift with a note expressing your appreciation for their business.

Even if you can't sell your existing customers a new big-ticket product or service, maybe you can sell them some accessories or an ancillary service. Frequently, our customers don't even know the scope of our offerings—they need us to tell them what else we offer. Those are sales just waiting to be made.

2. Ask for Referrals

Another way to leverage your existing relationships with customers is to ask them for referrals. A person who is referred to you is five times as likely to buy from you as any other type of prospect because they already have some trust in you based on their friend who referred them.

Too many salespeople never even ask for referrals, though. They're afraid of rejection or they don't want to be perceived as intrusive. But here's a secret: Your customer **wants** to give you referrals!

If you've taken good care of your customer and they're happy with your product or service (not just satisfied, but really **happy**), they want their friends and relatives to have that same experience.

Why don't customers simply **volunteer** referrals? Because they don't think about it. They're busy. They've got a lot of things competing for their attention. Which is why we have to ask. It's **our** responsibility, not theirs.

When asking for referrals, be specific. Ask questions like:

- Who else in your family...?
- Who else in your company...?
- Who else in your industry...?
- Who else in your circle of friends...?

The goal is to narrow down their thinking to make it easier for them to focus. The more specific you are in your requests, the more referrals you'll actually get.

3. Join a Leads Group

Leads groups—also called referral groups, tip clubs or resource groups—exist for the sole purpose of providing referrals to members of the group. Members are expected to generate leads for other members on a regular basis. For that reason, membership is limited to one company per industry, i.e. one lawyer, one printer, one florist, one insurance agent, etc.

Members typically meet weekly or bi-weekly over breakfast or lunch, usually at the same location. During each meeting, members have the opportunity to share with other members details about their business and what kinds of prospects they're seeking.

Most groups require a real commitment from all members. Groups typically have attendance and/or participation rules. Members can be fined or even expelled for missing too many meetings or not providing enough referrals. These rules exist to insure all members are contributing to the group as well as benefiting.

Depending on the size of your city or town, there may be dozens, or even hundreds, of leads groups in the area. To find one, check with your local Chamber of Commerce, do an online search or ask your friends and colleagues.

For a free Special Report, *How to Make More Sales with a Leads Group*, call me at 303-832-4248 or e-mail me at Don@DonCooper.com.

4. Initiate a Targeted Marketing Campaign

Marketing works. Good marketing works better. And targeted marketing works best of all. It's how you get the most bang for your marketing buck. Planned and executed correctly, a targeted marketing campaign can produce immediate results with a very small investment of time, energy and money.

When I was in college, I worked for Frank Meeks, the top franchisee for Domino's Pizza. At one point, he owned 18 of the top 20 Domino's outlets in the world. He required his store managers to spend a couple of hours each weekday afternoon putting door hangers (small, cardboard flyers with a hole at the top for hanging on a doorknob) on the front doors of a different neighborhood in their delivery area. That night, the phones would light up with calls from that neighborhood.

That's a targeted marketing campaign. People would come home from work, hungry and tired, and see this door hanger, which immediately put the idea of a fresh, hot pizza in their heads. (If you try, you can visualize them drooling.)

What's your door hanger?

Who is your target market? Where are they? What problem are they struggling with? What do they desperately need in order to solve it? How can you communicate with them quickly and inexpensively?

Be specific in your answers. ("Everyone" is not a target market.) The more detailed and precise you are, the more effective (and cost-effective) your marketing or prospecting campaign will be.

5. Make Some Cold Calls

Okay, so cold calls aren't on anybody's list of Top Ten Fun Things to Do. But they **can** be effective. Especially if they're targeted and you have a good script. What makes a sales script good? A good script:

- Starts off by asking permission.
- Asks the prospect questions, rather than making a pitch.
- Deals with an issue that's important to the prospect.
- Is phrased in terms of what's in it for the prospect.
- Gauges the prospect's level of interest.
- Is short, respecting the prospect's time.
- Requests permission for the next step, whether it's sending literature, a second phone call or meeting in person.

One way to make your cold calling more effective is to offer your prospect something of value:

- A free sample or trial
- A gift card
- An article, special report or white paper
- Seminars, teleseminars or webinars
- A free consultation, analysis, inspection, appraisal or evaluation
- Lunch
- A round of golf
- Tickets to a sporting event
- A planning guide
- Movie passes
- A repair kit

By the way, your brochure, informational DVD or catalog is **not** something of value. (At least, not from your **prospect's** perspective.) Ditto for a tour of your facility, an upgrade or a coupon. Whatever you offer prospects must be valuable in **their** eyes and come with no cost, risk or obligation.

[Linda Zenker](#), a real estate agent in Northern Virginia, gives away memo pads imprinted with her name, photo and contact information. (Everybody needs memo pads.) Emily Jasso of [Lehrer's Flowers](#) in Denver, CO, sends complimentary floral arrangements to prospects so they can see the impact flowers make in their business environment.

Linda Schafer, owner of [GL Specialties](#) shares a great story: "One of my customers bought candy dishes with his company's logo on them, filled them with candy and gave them to gatekeepers as he made cold calls. Refilling the dishes gives him an excuse to go back regularly and gatekeepers actually look **forward** to his visits!"

6. Join an Organization

There are two types of organizations you should consider joining: 1) Industry Associations, and 2) General Interest Business Groups. Each has its own merits.

Industry Associations

No matter what you do, there's an organization of people who do it. Professional or trade associations give you an opportunity to discuss industry challenges with your peers and learn from their experiences. You can refer or contract out business

when your customers want something you can't provide. (The competitors you refer will typically return the favor.) You might even go further and develop strategic partnerships to increase your capabilities or to handle work that no single company could manage on its own.

A completely different strategy is to join the trade associations of your target markets. Most groups allow "associate" or "vendor" members. By joining, you get an excellent opportunity to network with your best prospects.

Becoming a member of an association also gets you a copy of the membership directory, enabling you to create a **very targeted** direct mail campaign. Most industry associations also produce trade shows, giving you the opportunity to exhibit in front of your ideal buyers.

General Interest Business Groups

These groups are open to virtually anyone, so you may find both competitors and prospects within them. The best-known and most common are Chambers of Commerce, which exist at the local, state and national levels. Most Chambers are organized around a geographic area, but some have a racial, ethnic or gender focus. For example, there are Women's Chambers, Black Chambers, Asian Chambers, Hispanic Chambers, GLBT Chambers and many others.

Other general interest business organizations include the [National Federation of Independent Businesses](#), the [American Business Women's Association](#), the [International Franchise Association](#) and the [National Association of Women Business Owners](#). Organizations like these host all kinds of networking activities, as well as seminars, trade shows and other events.

7. Launch a Publicity Campaign

Publicity has two distinct advantages as a sales and marketing tool: 1) It's free, and 2) It carries more credibility than an advertisement. While you can't say the same things in a press release that you can in a sales letter or commercial, you can use publicity to increase your name recognition and create awareness of your business, product or service.

The key is to recognize that the media **needs** you. An editor's job is to fill space. A radio or TV producer's job is to fill airtime. Both are looking for entertaining stories or useful information that will make people want to watch, listen or read what they produce. That's where you come in. You can create press releases about anything as long as it's of potential interest to that media outlet's audience.

So what's your story? What information do you have that would be of interest to total strangers? What makes you or your business interesting? What have you done recently that people should know about? What tips can you share that could improve people's lives?

Whatever the answer, **that's** your press release. Write it down and e-mail it to every media outlet that might possibly be interested in your story.

You can even generate multiple press releases from a single story. For example, you could set up a scholarship in the name of your business at your local high school or community college—even if it's only \$100. Send a press release announcing the creation of the scholarship. Later, send another one announcing the event at which the scholarship will be awarded. Finally, send a third naming the recipient. A photo (or video) of you with a deserving student is positive publicity you can't buy.

Here are some other press release ideas:

- Business celebrates first, fifth, tenth, etc. anniversary
- Local business wins major contract
- Strategies for other small businesses
- Warning signs to watch for
- Ten tips for the perfect vacation, paint job, wedding, auction, etc.
- Local business mentors tomorrow's business leaders
- How to protect yourself from scams and rip-offs
- Company greening its business
- Fundraising event to support local charity
- Tips for taking care of your lawn and garden
- National Bike To Work Day
- Strategies for raising healthy children

Keep your publicity generator running! Don't plan one publicity campaign and expect to ride that wave forever. Make a publicity calendar and plan something every quarter, or more often if you can manage it.

Publicity expert Joan Stewart—*The Publicity Hound*—has an incredible number of **free** publicity resources, including e-books, articles and a free tutorial “89 Ways to Write Powerful Press Releases” at www.publicityhound.com.

8. Leverage the Power of Social Media

If you've been avoiding social media because you believe it's a waste of time, a fad or just for kids, it's time to rethink your position. Social media (or web 2.0) sites are growing in influence every day:

- In 2008, Dunkin' Donuts launched a highly successful [YouTube](#) campaign that solicited customer-created videos. This year, they're running a photo contest exclusively via social media sites.
- Dell Computers has seen their [Twitter](#) following grow from 11,000 people in March 2009 to over 600,000 just three months later. What's more, Dell can trace more than **\$3 million** in sales to their Twitter followers.
- Meanwhile, Coca-Cola has the second-most-popular page on [Facebook](#), trailing only President Obama. When Coke posts promotions on its Facebook page, they're seen by **3.4 million fans**. (Who has the third-most-popular Facebook page? Nutella. Go figure.)
- And [LinkedIn](#) is evolving into one of the best prospecting tools ever invented, creating massive communities of people who actively want to do business with each other.

So whether you're a salesperson, sales manager, CEO, business owner or professional, the time is ripe for you to leverage the massive potential of social media for your sales. Click on the links above to visit the referenced sites and set up your own accounts if you haven't already. (They're **free**—what a deal!)

Once you've joined, invest some time on each site exploring options for setting up fan pages, joining groups and inviting others to connect with you. Google some variation of the phrase "how to use YouTube/Facebook/LinkedIn/Twitter" and you'll find all kinds of resources to help you put these tools to work for you immediately.

By the way, you can click these links to [watch my videos on YouTube](#), [connect with me on LinkedIn](#), [befriend me on Facebook](#), or [follow me on Twitter](#).

9. Optimize Your Web Site

When someone does a search for the type of product or service you sell, how high up in the results does your web site appear? Do you know the terms people use to search for your product or service, and are those terms integrated well into your site? Are you making the best use of pay-per-click ads? When prospects visit your

site, what percentage of them actually contact you and how many leave your site never to return again?

If you don't know the answers to these questions, you're missing out on sales. And if you **know** the answers but you're not **happy** with them, you're not any better off.

Most web sites are like a book sitting on a dusty shelf in the world's biggest bookstore. A person looking for a book on that subject might eventually find it after a lot of searching, but odds are they'll pick up somebody else's book first. You want your web site to be the book in the giant colorful display right by the entrance. That's the result of site "optimization."

Optimizing your web site so it's easily found by potential prospects and then converts those prospects into actual leads is tricky business. Do it right and you'll have a never-ending supply of qualified prospects to talk with. Do it wrong and not only will you **not** get those prospects, you'll waste huge sums of money in the process.

To complicate matters, the field of search engine optimization (or SEO) is constantly changing. Which means you don't want to trust your site optimization to your web designer, in-house IT person or web hosting company. Hire a person or a company with proven SEO expertise and success.

You'll want to learn enough about SEO yourself to be able to select a good service provider as well as to converse and strategize intelligently with them. A great resource is the book, [*The Findability Formula: The Easy, Non-Technical Approach to Search Engine Marketing*](#) by Heather Lutze, one of the top SEO experts in the country.

10. Train Your Sales Team

The sale often doesn't go to the company with the best product or the best service, but to the company with the best **salespeople**. If you want your people to sell **more**, doesn't it make sense to train them how to sell **better**?

Training has been proven to provide the best ROI of any sales investment. In fact, a 2000 study of 575 U.S.-based, publicly traded companies by Laurie Bassi, Jens Ludwig, Daniel McMurrer and Mark Van Buren found that companies that spent more on training (per employee) experienced a total shareholder return (change in stock price and dividends issued) in the following year **86 percent higher** than companies that spent less, and **45 percent higher** than the market average. Further,

companies in the top quarter of the study group enjoyed **higher profit margins** (by 24 percent), **higher income per employee** (by 218 percent) and **higher price-to-book ratios** (by 26 percent) on average than companies in the bottom quarter.

Findings like these make perfect sense when you think about it. Salespeople who get regular training are more adept at finding quality prospects, delivering effective presentations, holding their margins and closing deals.

And such improvements can be immediate. I've had attendees of my seminars report back to me that they used what they learned **the very same day** to close sales.

So there you have it—ten ways to increase your sales, any of which you can start on today. What will you do first?



Don Cooper—The Sales Heretic™—is an internationally-acclaimed sales expert who helps salespeople, business owners and professionals dramatically increase their sales. He delivers custom training and keynote speeches for corporations, associations, chambers of commerce and other business organizations.

His most popular programs include:

- **Five Keys to Selling in Tough Times:** How to grow your sales in a shrinking economy
- **Never Sell Ice to Eskimos:** A practical program for powerful prospecting
- **Talking Your Way Into the Sale:** How to create and deliver powerful presentations
- **The Physics of Closing:** How to make the hardest part of the sale easy

For information about booking Don to speak to your group, please call 303-832-4248 or e-mail Don@DonCooper.com. You can also find free articles, tips and other information at www.DonCooper.com.