

Winning tactics for to closing the sale

Understanding your prospects better can help your bottom line

By Dan Antonelli, President and Creative Director, Graphic D-Signs, Inc. and SignShopMarketing.com

Having worked with over 500 small business owners in the last 15 years, I've learned a lot about how most owners think when choosing a company to work with on their marketing. Whether they need a brochure, a sign, a truck wrap or a Web site, they each have a need and have come to you to help fulfill that need.

But often times, they don't know exactly what they need, or even the best way to get what they think they want. So the sales process begins, with you questioning what they are trying to accomplish and offering

solutions based on your experience, which you think will solve their problem.

But often, even after offering them a solution, you still don't get the job. While the reasons may vary, it's easy to conclude that the reasons are solely based on pricing: You were too high and they went to someone else whom they think can solve their problem for a lower cost.

Many successful businesspeople are extremely astute in their chosen professions, but most have no experience in marketing or advertising. Most of the time, the job is lost because of these two primary obstacles: fear and/or lack of education about what they are buying.

Let's tackle fear first The fear a business owner has about hiring you is generally based on the notion of not believing you are the right company to solve their problem. They're afraid that the money they spend with you won't work. When you're dealing with the owner of a small business, it's their money to lose. They're more likely to choose a competitor whose price is less, because they perceive the risk to be less to themselves.

Overcoming the fear is usually best accomplished by diminishing their perceived risk. One way to accomplish that is to use your body of work as a means to trumpet your success stories—especially for businesses just like theirs. For example, when a landscaper comes in looking for truck lettering only, but you're trying to sell him a logo package plus the lettering, do you have real world case studies to help him understand the value of that service? Can you show the application of that logo on business cards, stationery and vehicles so that he understands how you might accomplish the same for his business?

Or, another approach might be more fiscally based. You could show examples of how your sign, banner or vehicle was effective for a client, and how that translated into more business for them. This requires more digging



This package presented by Rick Chavez [Kingpin Creative, Valle Vista, California, www.kingpincreative.com] shows how you can demonstrate to the client that you're looking at their entire image.



Showing the implementation of the logo on many different mediums makes it easier for potential clients to visualize and understand the value of building their brand, and establishing a consistent corporate identity.

on your part and follow-up with clients to collect that data. But often those who have had excellent results from your work are very excited to share that news.

Harnessing that information, and putting that in front of your potential clients, helps alleviate their fear. They see results you've delivered for others and you're offering to help them in the same manner. Even testimonials are effective, and the most effective ones contain real world data—such as, “The new sign resulted in an increase of 30% in foot traffic to our store...”

We have used case studies extensively on our Web site, with over 30 real world success stories of our work. Our investment in the development of them is substantial, and it's something we are constantly on top as new work is completed. Perhaps it's even overkill. But the more I can showcase our success, the



If you go to our site, www.graphicd-signs.com, and click the *Browse our Case Studies* tab, you'll see how we use these to gain customer confidence.

signature SIGNS NEWSLETTER

When you need sign therapy - we've got the cure!

Dec 2009

COUNTRY BASKET
Let's Grow Together!

A Brand New Look!
Country Basket Garden Centre on Lundy's Lane desperately needed some help! Owner, Paul Bongers struggled with the idea of change but he knew it was time for some sign therapy!

Signature Signs developed a fresh take on an old name with a new logo that has become the brand for Country Basket's marketing tool box.

905-357-0885 www.signaturesigns.on.ca jeff.signaturesigns@bellnet.ca

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Elaine and Jeff Wallis, Signature Signs, Niagara Falls, Ontario, Canada, use a great-looking newsletter to help show customers what their shop is capable of—another way of putting the fears of prospective customers to rest.

less fear a potential client may have.

You can also have printed sales sheets with the same information to hand out to potential customers. The more ammo you have in your arsenal, the easier it will be for them to help choose your firm over someone else.

Lack of education on your services The tagline for a well-known clothing store here on the east coast is “an educated consumer is our best customer.” It’s a great tagline and it’s really true. The more your customer knows about how your product or service is superior, the more likely they are to pay more for it.

Sometimes it’s easy for us to forget that most potential clients don’t fully understand what they are buying. They don’t know the difference between a carved sign or a sand-blasted sign. Or why cast vinyl is better than calendered. And as such, it makes it harder for those selling a premium product or service to have a potential client understand why their pricing might be higher than a competi-

Westlane Secondary School ... Not just a Sign!

It's part of the Legacy!

This is the second time that Signature Signs was part of Westlane's "sign" history. The first time was about 20 years ago when a Westlane co-op student, Dan Michitsch, while working at Signatures asked if he could build a sign for his school. Owner Jeff Wallis, a proud Westlane alumni, offered to donate the shop and the material and Westlane got a sign.

When DSBN put out the call for a Request For Proposal on a new backlit pole sign with a digital message board, Signature Signs pulled out all the stops to supply not just a spectacular new sign but a LOGO that would part of Westlane's legacy.

WESTLANE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Remember Our Heroes

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Welcome day and night ... another sign legacy!



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tor's. It behooves you to spend time educating your client about what makes you unique, and better than the guy down the road.

Make the investment It's important to make the investment in producing sales tools that help educate your customer and alleviate the fear that they may have in hiring you. Knowing and understanding the mindset of the average customer, and the potential obstacles to a sale can only help in the sales process. It doesn't always work, but at least you've done everything you can to help to increase your odds of success. •SC



Dan Antonelli owns Graphic D-Signs, Inc. in Washington, New Jersey. He is the author of *Logo Design for Small Business I and II*. His newly-redesigned Web site:

www.signshopmarketing.com caters to the marketing needs of sign shops. He can be reached at dan@graphicd-signs.com, and you can follow him at http://twitter.com/graphicdsigns.