

Are You Starting The Year With Any Momentum?

2018 was a good year for many printers. Sadly, it was not a good year for everyone. And even within the realm of “good” there was a range from “slightly good” to “crazy good,” wasn’t there?

Regardless of where you fell in that range, you have something else to worry about now – 2019! So let’s start thinking about making 2019 a really good year.

Sales Momentum

The first thing you should be thinking about is whether your sales trend is positive, negative or neutral. In other words, are you coming into the new year with any sales momentum? If you are, your primary sales & marketing challenge is to maintain that momentum. If you’re not — if your sales trend over the last few months is negative or neutral — your challenge is to *create* some momentum!

How do you do that? The best strategy is a combination of re-connecting with current customers and starting some balls rolling toward new customer development. If you haven’t had any “high level discussions” with your most important current customers recently, it’s likely that this activity will identify some immediate opportunities for growth. And if you couple that with a solid measure of prospecting and follow-up activity, you’ll be laying the foundation for another surge of new business a little further into the year as some of those prospects move through the consideration process and decide to give you a try.

What do I mean by “high level discussion” with a current customer? Let’s define that as a conversation that’s not limited to what they’re buying in the present, but expanded to cover what they’ve bought from you in the past, and what they might be willing and/or able to buy from you in the future. This conversation is really about change; what’s changed or changing in their business, and what’s changed or changing in yours.

“I’d like to ask you about your plans for 2019,” you might say, *“especially as they concern your needs for printing (or any other service you provide.) Do you expect to purchase the same sort of things from us in the same sort of quantities as you have in the past? Are there new projects or products you anticipate needing printed support materials for? Can we also talk about things you’ve been buying from other printers, things you may not have known that we were capable of handling?”* After asking about their needs, you should go on and tell them about any new capabilities you have added or plan to add, and anything else that has changed or will be changing in your business.

You may not have time to have this conversation with every one of your customers over the next 4-6 weeks, but I hope you’ll see the wisdom in *making* the time to have it with a certain group of customers. That group should include your “20/80’s” — the 20-or-so-percent of your customers who probably represent 80-or-so-percent of your current sales volume — and it should also include all of the customers who you think only buy a small percentage of their printing from you. In all likelihood, these “undersold” customers are the ones who provide you the greatest chance of an immediate boost in sales.

Compounding Power

Beyond the strategy, the best advice I can give you is to act now! That’s how you get “compounding power” working for you. This is exactly the same effect you get from compounding interest; the earlier you start saving, the more you end up with in the end!

Don’t wait until later in the year to start working at increasing sales and profits. It’s not that you won’t benefit from the effort whenever you start it, the bigger issue is that you’d be wasting months of compounding power by not starting now.

A little positive momentum, generated early, could be the key to an *epic* 2019!