



## Lack of Follow-Up Translates Into Lost Sales

Waiting too long to follow up on sales leads has cost me thousands of dollars in lost business. This was one of the most painful mistakes I made during the early years of owning a business. When I waited too long to return a phone call or send out a requested proposal, my prospective clients took their business elsewhere.

Over the years, I have noticed an interesting trend with my business. When I have received inquiries about my services through my website or a referral, the faster I responded, the more likely I was to land the contract. While the following percentages are not scientific, they have held true for my business.

- An inquiry that I respond to the same day I receive it will convert into a sale about 80% of the time.
- An inquiry that I respond to within one week of receiving it will convert into a sale about 60% of the time.
- An inquiry that I wait more than a week before I respond will convert into a sale about 30% of the time.

Those inquiries that I put aside and respond when I find I have some extra time rarely, if ever, convert into sales.

Your customers and prospects are far too busy to give you a second chance. You either want their

business or you don't. If you do, you need to prove it to them. Whether you're in sales or customer service, your response time and attention to details can make or break the deal. A customer or prospect should not be the one doing the work in order to give you their business.

For example, I called a company this morning to inquire about a service they offer. The receptionist informed me that the gentleman I was calling was out of the office. She then said the words that were the kiss of death. "You'll have to call back in about 45 minutes when he returns." She did not ask to take a message. When I asked if he had voicemail, she replied, "No. We don't use voicemail in our office."

Needless to say, they lost the sale already. I will not call back because the one interaction gave me a sample of what I could expect if I took my business to that company. I will not waste my time trying to connect with a person from whom I want to purchase products or services. That's their job.

**Here are five tips to increase your sales through effective follow up:**

### 1. Recognize that even your existing customers are prospects.

The moment one of your existing customers inquires about making an additional purchase of your products or services, they become a prospect. Even though an individual is already doing business with you, they are about to increase their level of commitment and they need to be treated like gold.



## Lack of Follow-Up Translates Into Lost Sales (continued)...

### 2. Call back the same day.

When a prospect emails or leaves you a phone message inquiring about a service or product, always return their call on the same day you received it, no matter where you are. I return phone calls from airports, in taxis, between meetings and even during breaks in my seminars. It only takes a moment to return a call. If you know that you won't be able to have a lengthy conversation, explain that you are on a tight time frame but you wanted to call back right away. Then, ask your prospect if you may have their permission to call them later that day or tomorrow. This puts them in the driver's seat, because they are directing you as to the time that will work best for them.

### 3. Return inquiries ASAP.

If you receive an inquiry via email, send a message back to that individual the same day. Then, pick up the phone to let them know you have replied to their email message and invite them to call if they have questions or need more information. A phone call creates a much stronger connection to the prospect and demonstrates your commitment to following up on communications.

### 4. Leave a message on voicemail.

If you return a call and you get the prospective customer's voicemail, leave a message and ask them to return your call to let you know the best time to reach them the following day.

If they tell you they are available at 2:00 p.m. the next day, try to call them precisely at 2:00. They will make a mental note of the fact that you listened to their needs and responded. Even if it turns out they were not there to take your call, they noticed that you kept your promise.

### 5. Deliver on your promised date.

If your prospect requests a proposal for your services, be realistic in your promised date.

Deliver the proposal exactly on the date promised or a day earlier if possible. Never, ever miss a proposal deadline. If an emergency arises and you know you can't make the deadline, call your prospect well in advance of the due date and request an extension.

The bottom line is this. The way you follow up or fail to follow up with prospective customers will influence the way they perceive your work ethic. No one wants to do business with an individual who cannot be counted on to keep his or her promises.

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Debra J. Schmidt (deb@loyaltyleader.com)  
Loyalty Leader Inc.  
P.O. Box 170954  
Milwaukee, WI 53217 8086