NESSO STRATEGIES

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT FOR INTROVERTS

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It's one of the biggest challenges introverts in business say they face: the sales process.

There's an old story floating around about what it means to do business development. Our mind fills with visions of an ethically questionable used car salesmen, or high-pressure "Act now!" scarcity tactics that must work, or else people wouldn't do them… right?

But that's not your style, is it? The truth is, you wish you could just have somebody else do the selling for you, so you can focus on delivering your expertise to your clients. Sales funnels and prospecting activities are necessary evils. The relationships are where it's at.

And that's your opportunity. Years ago, I thought I needed to create a sales plan. Then I realized, no… it's a marketing plan. Oh wait, it's not that either. It's a communications and content plan! Eh, scratch that. It's a relationship plan.

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It's a simple shift: think of business development as relationship building, not sales. When you do that, you can more easily craft strategies that play to your introvert preferences for listening, forming lasting connections, going deep rather than broad, and hyper-focusing your energy where there is the potential for the highest return.

If we look at business building as relationship building, we can shift our intention to being of service, not closing the sale. It's by positioning ourselves as a trusted resource and problem solver that we cultivate client loyalty become their legal professional of choice.

Your first objective is to clarify what kinds of relationships you want to be in, and what problems you want to solve. Examine your messaging and market positioning. If you're not making meaningful connections with qualified prospects or enrolling clients, there's a chance people are confused about what you offer, what your strengths are, and how you are the solution to their problem. ***A confused mind always says no.*** A prospect might say, "She looks like she'd provide what I need, but…" and they don't take the time to connect the dots that you have scattered all over the page.

You want your prospective client to read your material or listen to you speak and have a clear yes or no about your compatibility. A certain amount of teasing or playing hard to get might work with some prospects who have the time and energy to do the digging. But most people want to feel a bit of love at first sight, which you can facilitate by being clear on who you serve and what differentiates you from your colleagues.

Once you have that clarity and have simplified your messaging, you can look at a content and relationship building strategy that supports it.

My favorite approach is to look at it through the framework of Moves Management. **Moves Management** is a term used in the world of nonprofit fund development. Here's one definition: *"a system, a process and a plan for building a relationship that moves individual prospects to engaged, passionate donors."* (Alexander Haas Martin & Partners)

I use this expression because I have found that enrolling clients is very similar to raising money for an organization. Donors – and in our case, clients – move through a process that is established by the organization. If the strategy is clear and intentional, and the organization knows exactly who it wants to reach, each touch point is designed to shift the relationship to a deeper level of connection. For nonprofits, the lowest level of engagement is awareness of the organization's existence and being on the mailing list. The highest is a donor who makes a planned gift (allotting part of the donor's estate to the organization upon the donor's death).

The donor is not necessarily aware of the moves the organization is putting on them. If it's all done smoothly, the donor moves from level to level rather seamlessly, and of their own volition.

The same is true for your prospective clients. A well-designed Moves Management process – which I call an Engagement Funnel – outlines clear steps for you to take (and clear content for you to create) that transitions a person from Casual to Convinced. Each section represents a deepening of the client's relationship and investment.

CASUAL

Offerings (blog, podcasts, social media) at this stage determine a prospect's first impression of you; they begin the journey of someone knowing, liking, and trusting you. In general, unless the prospective client makes a comment or is required to provide an email to access information, he can remain an anonymous lurker. People are standing on the edge of your business, with one foot in, one foot out.

CONNECTED

Information products/services in this category require more direct communication and connection. The client declares herself and decides to share her information in return for a higher level of interaction from you. There is usually an exchange of value, typically of money or an email address/contact info.

The content you deliver (workshops, newsletters, speaking, etc.) is one-to-many. Your offerings reflect your expertise in a deeper way than at Casual, and they can be used in one of two ways: 1) give the client enough "DIY" information that she can take it from there, or 2) give the client enough information that he is inspired, curious, and made aware of the benefits of moving to the Committed level.

COMMITTED

At this level, the interaction and content shifts from one-to-many to one-to-one. The relationship is deeper and more personal. You're working together through a formal agreement, coaching, consulting, advising, mentoring, or providing direct, custom services/products.

CONVINCED

Working with a client at this level is the result of her knowing, liking, and trusting you. She is convinced that you and your business are the right fit for her needs long-term (which is relative to your business – could be months or years). She becomes an advocate and a source of quality referrals. You are delivering your highest level of services and products, in terms of quality, customization, and financial investment.

As you create content, consider where it fits into your Engagement Funnel. Communicate clear benefits to your prospects, and have a compelling call to action appropriate to where they are in the funnel.

Recognizing where your strategies fall on the relationship-building continuum can help release the old story of sales being about pressure or manipulation. It opens the door to a new story, a much more introvert-friendly (and client oriented!) one that focuses on building trust and connection.

For more information and further reading on Coaching and Planning, visit our online library.

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Beth Buelow, PCC, serves as a guide to introvert entrepreneurs who want to amplify their strengths and build sustainable, energetically aligned businesses. She is a professional coach, author, podcaster, and speaker, is based in the Pacific Northwest and serves introverts worldwide. She's contributed to articles in The Wall Street Journal, Success Magazine, Inc, Entrepreneur, The Telegraph, and Psychology Today, among others. Beth is the author of "The Introvert Entrepreneur: Amplify Your Strengths and Create Success on Your Own Terms" (Penguin Random House, Nov 2015), which was named one of the 100 Best Business Books of 2015 by Inc.com.