

## **Converting Your Contacts into Sales**

While Tudog has long rallied against the idea that the use of network is the sole fundamental consideration of a business strategy, we have also pointed out on numerous occasions that understanding how to properly mobilize your network can serve your company well. The primary caution we have is all too often companies bank on their network and use the notion of “who they know” dictate strategy and priority. Tudog prefers the question asked be “who do we need to know”, and then build the business from the point of maximum potential.

Having clarified this important point, the use of your network to generate sales is a critical component of your overall sales strategy. The efficiency of your effort will be derived from how well you understand the people in your network, your standing and reputation, your ability to motivate and encourage people, and your ability to direct people to what it is you actually need from them. These elements are the key factors in maneuvering your personal network to a place where they will be interested and willing to help you.

Another important point to be emphasized is that while you are indeed asking for assistance you should not be doing so through an appeal to their kindness, friendship or obligation. You need to construct mutually beneficial arrangements, which might include compensation of some sort or perhaps reciprocity in that you will refer opportunities to them as well.

Motivating your network is a 2-phase process; (1) creating the relationship, and (2) asking for contacts. Here are some additional hints on how you can make the most of your network and generate revenue through the people you know:

### **Creating the Relationship**

#### **1. Go Slow**

Too often people blow a good contact by asking the other person to leverage their capabilities too soon. You have time. Cultivate the relationship before you seek to exploit it. Make sure the relationship is there and genuine and that the value proposition for the other party is firmly established.

#### **2. Stay in Touch**

Nobody likes to be called only when something is needed of them. When you know that a person has the potential to be a good contact, make sure you stay in touch even during those times when you don't need anything specific from them.

#### **3. Keep Track of Your Network**

We live in a very fast paced world. People are jumping from job to job today faster than ever before. Keep track of where everyone is and make sure that you acknowledge all moves with best wishes for success. Keeping track not only allows you show your dedication to the relationship, it also opens up new opportunities as the new position your contact now holds may in fact be even more valuable to you.

#### 4. Get Personal

While there are certainly limits to how personal you should get (and you will know the boundaries of each relationship), most people appreciate an email or call expressing best wishes for a birthday or joyous family occasion. By acknowledging an event you not only show you care, you are also showing you were listening when they mentioned their upcoming event.

### **Asking for Contacts**

#### 1. Educate Your Contact

Even those with the best intentions cannot help you if they do not completely understand what it is you are talking about. You need to take the time to explain your products and your company to your contacts. Including aspects like value proposition, benefits delivered, market need, and competitive advantage. Armed with this understanding, your contact will be able to better understand not only what you need from him or her, but also who might be the most appropriate people to introduce you to.

#### 2. Ask Permission

Nobody likes to feel like they are being taken advantage of. Once you have decided that you want to leverage a relationship to expand your network and gain introduction to sales opportunities, ask your contact for permission to use his or her name when calling on their contact.

#### 3. Make Sure You're Focused

People will see their helping you as an extension of their own credibility. In other words, they will not introduce you to other people if they fear that you will not make the right impression. Make sure you are focused and direct when asking for assistance and make sure they understand that you will be considerate of their reputation when leveraging their network.

#### 4. Follow-up

Another way to possibly alienate people who have good intentions toward you is by not follow-up. If someone introduces you to a contact of theirs and you pursue the new relationship make sure you keep the introducing party in the loop. It is a simple courtesy that demonstrates your appreciation and acknowledgement of their help.

The conversion of network into sales is a process that requires that you earn the goodwill of others through your own considerate and professional actions. By earning the support of others, you will expand your network, establish meaningful relationships, and grow your company's bottom line.