

VIEW FROM THE TOP

UNLOCK YOUR MARKETPLACE: How to access opportunities

Business opportunities aren't going to just fall in your lap. You have to work for them. We reached out to three marketing experts to get their take on the best way to spot these opportunities that might not be readily apparent.

By **HEATHER CENTORBI**

Prospecting for clients and accessing opportunities in your specific marketplace are a few of the many challenges a small business is faced with every day. Though many sales people know how to lead a client or prospect through a successful sales funnel, not many focus on or know how they can get to that prospect in the first place.

If you are not focused on prospecting or new ways to access prospects, you are missing an opportunity to become a great sales person. For small business owners, evaluating these market opportunities is key to remaining competitive while maintaining growth.

With that in mind, for this edition of "View from the Top" *Mind Your Business* reached out to several marketing companies that regularly help clients address this issue. Here's what they had to say:

Matt Sonnhalter

President, Sonnhalter

Matt Sonnhalter, president of marketing communications firm Sonnhalter, says to find opportunities, you'll need to break away from your desk.

He says attending key industry trade shows is important because it will allow you to get face time with your prospects. Set up meetings ahead of time and have a plan of attack before attending the trade show, he advises. This will help you put your best foot forward.

According to Trade Show News Network, there are several powerful reasons why you should put in an appearance at a trade show or conference. These include:

- On average, 81% of trade show attendees have buying authority.
- 99% of marketers report finding unique value from trade shows they did not get from other mediums.
- The average attendee spends 8.3 hours viewing trade show exhibits.

OK, SOOOOOOOOO ... NOW WHAT?

Alright, you are going to attend a trade show. Now what? Matt Radicelli, CEO of Rock the House, has a few tips:

- If you're going to have a booth, do a little role playing ahead of time. What are you going to say as people approach?
- Make sure your booth is inviting. Add a large backdrop and keep it open. "I see the Great Wall of China when I see a table," he says. "I see a wall between you and attendees. It can prevent getting successful leads."
- Remain attentive. Don't sit down. Don't lean on anything. Shake hands when people approach.
- Be ready to keep working even after the show ends. Did you get business cards? You did? Awesome! Make sure you follow up with everyone you got a card from within 48 hours.



Michelle Venorsky

Co-founder and partner, Hello, LLC

Sometimes you need to create your own opportunities—especially when you are just starting out. When marketing engagement agency Hello, LLC first got off the ground, one of the tactics it took was to do a little work to help establish themselves in the market.



For example, Venorsky says the firm had pre-existing relationships with other agencies in the area so they touched base with those folks to get on their radar and let the firms know Hello was standing ready to support and assist in any way they needed. In addition, Hello reached out to potential brand clients that fit in with Hello's strategy.

"The relationships we started early on are still benefitting us today," she says.

OK, SOOOOOOOOO ... NOW WHAT?

Venorsky reflects on the strategy the firm relied upon during the cold calls to potential clients. During the calls, the firm would try to relay helpful marketing tips (e.g., "Here's an example of a successful marketing campaign in your industry" or "We noticed your Facebook isn't as engaging as it could be.")

Offering free tidbits such as these was a great way to break the ice early on and got Hello noticed. Once the representative on the other end of the line got the idea Hello wasn't trying to sell, they became much more receptive.

"They got the idea the work we were doing was genuine," she says.

Another cold calling tip: Focus on companies that do work in industries you want to have a presence in. And then research that company: Who's their marketing person? What kind of PR work has that company done in the past? Find out as much as you can and develop your cold calling script around that information. Being prepared will not only help you feel more confident on the call, but it will show the firm you're calling that you mean business.

Bob Rawlins

Senior VP, digital marketing strategies, Hileman Group

Located in the heart of Cleveland, Hileman Group, an interactive digital marketing firm, has used personalization to enable it to find new opportunities.



Rawlins believes taking the time to over-research a company or prospect can provide excellent knowledge in drafting a more personalized email.

"Too many times I get emails from people that I know have not researched me or the company and they provide irrelevant content or information that I can see right through," he says.

Data around the effectiveness of personalizing email seems to back up Rawlins' point. Research from data firm Aberdeen Group shows that personalizing emails increases click through rates by 14%.

Rawlins agrees that personalized digital solutions, such as micro sites, landing pages and custom applications, can prove especially effective. "If you aren't on the digital highway, you are not in the fast lane of best practices for new opportunities," Rawlins says.

OK, SOOOOOOOOO ... NOW WHAT?

Personalization is great and all, but how do you do that without getting too creepy about it while at the same time getting people to be receptive? Rawlins says LinkedIn is a great prospecting tool that small business owners can use to research a person, a company, or see if there are connections within your own network who could make an introduction.

As for getting people to be receptive, Rawlins says you can't beat relevant content that fits your audience's interests. "People engage in things of personal interest, not normal 'marketing' garbage, which is what everyone does." **MYB**



NEXT STEPS

It's easy to fall into the trap of staying at your desk too much. To access opportunities, sometimes you have to get out and network. Visit www.cose.org/events for a list of events where you can do just that.

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