

# HOW TO MAKE YOUR STAFFING COMPANY **STAND OUT** **STAY TOP OF MIND** AND WIN MORE BUSINESS

## IS YOUR STAFFING COMPANY THE BIGGEST? THE CHEAPEST? THE ONLY ONE PROVIDING THE SERVICES YOU OFFER? NO?

Then why do customers choose your staffing service over the competition? And more importantly, how will you ensure they keep choosing you?

If the key to your success is providing terrific service that's commendable, but you're not alone. Many staffing companies pride themselves on their service. As a result, there are many, many staffing companies saying the same things...

"We'll do a better job ...meeting your needs"

"We have the best...recruiting/screening/service"

"We care about ...our customers"

"We are ...problem solvers"

Put yourself in the shoes of a poor HR manager. Every day you're called on by staffing companies, and everyday you hear a different version of the same sales line. Before long, you'd stop believing just about anything a staffing sales rep said.

In today's market, a staffing company won't survive long without great service—it's the minimum cost of doing business. But service is no longer the differentiating factor it once was. In a super-competitive industry like staffing, standing apart from the competition isn't easy.

But it can be done.

## Where the BUSINESS Is

Before getting to the solution, let's first look where the opportunity is. In staffing, there are essentially three types of buyers:



### The VOLUME Purchaser

...the heavy user of staffing, companies who will use \$500,000 or more in staffing services each year.

### The BOUTIQUE Shopper

...the companies with a very specialized needs.

### The MIDDLE Market

...everyone else. From the onesy, twosey buyers to the companies with regular needs for contingent help and other staffing services.

Volume buyers almost always buy on price. Why? Because they can, and it makes sense. When a company hires many people for the same job, quality and service, while still of value, are not as critical as price.

If you get 10% or 20% bad fills, it does not have a big impact on the overall performance of the organization. Plus the bad fills can be quickly replaced. While there certainly are exceptions to this rule, most volume purchasers are price buyers. And unless you can compete with the Nationals, or those local competitors who act as if they don't care about making a profit, this is not where your opportunity lies.

For the boutique shopper, margins mean little. While no one wants to over pay, what matters most is finding the right person with the skills to do the job. Many users of technical and professional staffing fall into this category. These customers cannot afford a staffing error. Just one bad person could jeopardize a project or even worse their whole company. Boutique shoppers are best served by specialists. If your staffing firm has the capability to specialize, and the market you serve is large enough to support your specialty, terrific—go for it!

But if you're like many commercial staffing firms, you need to be successful in the middle market. The middle market is where many of the best staffing services make their money. However, it has the least homogenous customer base of the three groups. It consists of small, medium, and large sized organizations. In these companies, staffing buyers can range from secretaries to HR managers right on up through the CEO. And at least 90% of the potential users of staffing are already working with a staffing service. So, where is your opportunity? Two key factors drive opportunity in the middle market. The foremost among these is indifference.

“Caring in a business world grown numb, is an almost unfair advantage”

- Jim Cecil

Take a Look at the  
CHART below.

It summarizes the primary reasons companies change vendors. Hard to believe, but even in this era of “exceeding customer expectations,” over two thirds of business is lost due to supplier indifference.



In other words, companies are not doing what it takes to keep their customers loyal—or even worse they are chasing customers away! For your business, a tremendous opportunity exists to overcome indifference. Show your competitor's customers you care more about their staffing needs than their current suppliers do. Show your existing customers that no one can match your commitment to delivering bottom-line results.

## Lack of differentiation

The second, related factor is lack of differentiation. Thank goodness Microsoft is in the computer industry. For if there was a Microsoft in staffing (i.e., a company that just about every one has to use), winning new customers would be enormously difficult. Luckily, no company dominates staffing. In fact, reality is quite the opposite. The staffing

industry remains highly fragmented, and buyers have a great deal of difficulty telling one company from the next—which means terrific opportunity for you. You can actually be different. Do things your competitors don't do. Overcome the buyer's indifference.

## The Most SUCCESSFUL Staffing Strategy

Would you like to acquire the strategy used by today's most successful staffing firms?

GOOD NEWS, IT'S FREE. And It May Be Something You Already Do—But Your Business May Not Be Taking Full Advantage Of It. If You're Tired Of Fighting The Battle For The Lowest Mark-Up, Then There Is Only One Strategy To Follow—

### Build Relationships.

Your best customers (and most profitable ones) are likely the companies with which you have built the best relationships. And conversely, the companies where relationships become neglected often turn into a problem, or even worse—former, customers. Relationship building is a marketing tool—and much more. It is a business strategy; an attitude that permeates successful businesses at all levels. The objective is to create mutually profitable relationships with your customers, and then to seek opportunities for future gain and to share in the benefits those opportunities provide.

In developing a relationship driven strategy, a staffing company must:

1. Focus on the right customers to serve (Who are the most profitable customers? The best opportunities?)
2. Develop unique marketing and sales strategies for different types of decision-makers.
3. Understand the customer's expectations, and become an advocate for its customers.
4. Put the capabilities in place to deliver—at all levels of the organization.

A successful relationship strategy requires a combination of people, process, technology, knowledge, and insight. People drive relationship building—they make the bonds occur (and they can just as easily break them). The right process yields consistency and ensures that client expectations are being met. Technology gathers the data for analysis and enables communication. Knowledge is required to analyze the data, develop a course of action, and lead the strategy's implementation. And insight is the key to understanding what your customers want and expect.

The goal of a relationship building strategy is to align your business with your customers' businesses on as many levels as possible.

It starts with sales and marketing, and continues through your service and operations practices. It is affected by every interaction you have with your prospects and customers—from how you answer the phone to your follow-up on each placement.

## Putting STRATEGY Into action

Lets evaluate the dynamics of a relationship building strategy for a staffing service.

Why are relationships needed?  
Bottom line, people do business with people. And in the middle market, where differentiation is most difficult, the selection of vendors is often driven by the customer's attitude towards the people who work for your company.

Equally important is that people buy emotionally.



Seventy percent of purchase decisions are made on emotional criteria.

Yet in sales and marketing, many companies focus on features and benefits—the rational appeals. While the rational appeals are important, the emotional appeals should not be overlooked. For a staffing firm, one

of the most critical emotions is trust. How are your sales and marketing efforts building trust in the capabilities of your organization?

### The Next Question

The next question is with whom to build relationships. The obvious answer is “decision makers.” But, the real answer is anyone and everyone who can influence the purchase decision. This includes senior decision makers, end users and department heads, order placers, and even the gatekeepers like secretaries and administrative assistants. For your business, the people with whom you want to build relationships will range from receptionists to the CEOs. You need to identify the appropriate people within each organization you target as a prospective customer.

Of course, as a staffing service, you cannot forget your other critical constituency—your applicants. In addition to clients, your business should focus on enhancing relationships with your current temporary employees, your prospective applicants, and other individuals who could act as applicant referral sources.

### The Final Question

The final question is how to build relationships? However, this question has two parts: How do you forge relationships with new clients? And how do you maintain and enhance relationships with established clients? Since the focus of this article is new business, lets concentrate on the tactics of building relationships with prospective clients.

## Secrets to

### STAFFING

#### Success

#### Recruiting skill

- Ability to find people
- Ability to accurately fill orders

#### Good service

- Responsiveness
- Caring
- Understanding clients
- Follow-up

#### Relationship building

- Targeting the right clients
- Finding the decision makers
- Persistence
- Leveraging past success
- Differentiating with actions

## Winning PROSPECTS

With prospects, relationships require careful nurturing. Forget the hype and clever taglines. Effective marketing in the staffing industry is all about being different—but different in a positive, value-added way. Show people you understand the things that matter to them. Share information prospects can actually use. Help people to become more successful and make their lives a little easier. Remember, your prospects are being bombarded with staffing messages every day. They may not believe the things you claim, but they will believe the things you do!

Be different.

Be aware that there are different types of prospects, and each has different needs and interests. In developing a relationship building strategy, create an appropriate marketing plan for each target audience. Focus on the common challenges these people have as well as common interests. Position yourself as not just a staffing firm, but a resource that provides education, useful information, and of course staffing expertise.

The biggest challenge of building relationships with prospects is time. Forging relationships requires a great deal of persistence. But who has the time? Sales people need to focus their attention on top prospects and existing clients.

Nurturing relationships can consume a great deal of your sales force's time. Time that could be spent with contacts that are ready to place an order or have a real interest in your service.

The most effective nurturing processes rely heavily on written communication.

Mail and e-mail are used to keep in-touch with people and share useful information. Telephone follow-up is then integrated to gather feedback and further refine the nurturing efforts.



The goal in nurturing is to open the channels of communication, and over time create opportunities for productive dialog. Relationship marketing eliminates the need for costly cold calls, and helps maximize the productivity of your sales efforts.

### In SUMMARY...

If you're ready to grow your business, relationship building is the most logical—and profitable—strategy to pursue. It is the one strategy that can clearly differentiate your firm from the competition, and overcome indifference. And it is the one the Nationals can't compete against.

Start by getting to know your customers—who they are, what they are interested in, and how you can help them achieve their goals. With this information, you can put a plan into place that communicates your value, gently and persistently sells your service, and in time wins business better than any sales and marketing approach you have tried before.

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