

8 ways marketing agencies can position themselves for sales success

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Marketing agencies may devote the majority of their time to managing the campaigns of existing clients, but those marketing agency owners are like those of any other business: They're always looking to increase revenue.

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And a big problem here may be that few marketing agencies have the resources for dedicated sales and business development teams. Yet that's still no excuse to forgo entirely leveraging best practices, strategic planning and certain passive strategies to position themselves for sales success.

Sales success starts with your marketing strategy.

If you're a marketing pro yourself, you know that the sales process begins long before anyone picks up the phone. So you need to take a look at your marketing strategy to ensure there's alignment there with your sales activity. Here are four related steps:

Have an ideal customer: Few businesses can truly claim the ability to service anyone and everyone. Competition among agencies is fierce, so it's imperative to . That might mean a client within a particular industry, or a client with a particular scope of work. What's important is to establish a clear understanding of whom you want to work with. Align your messaging with your skill set, experience, or interests -- anything to better differentiate and help the stranger visiting your site understand that he or she is the person you've been waiting for.

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Activate the magnets: Now that you know whom you want to work with, begin preparing the tools to attract those folks. focused on blogging, using the keywords your target audience cares about, and social media to help spread your message. Between the organic search value your SEO offers and the social efforts you make to broaden your horizons, plus how carefully you've positioned your content, you'll not only increase traffic to your site but ensure that those visitors are better qualified.

Create a conversion path: Given all the effort you put into getting onto visitors' radar, you have to give them something to do once they arrive at your website. So, create several calls-to-actions (CTAs) and a that fulfills two purposes: It helps enrich prospects' experience by providing additional content exploring a topic that matters to them in greater depth (building trust in your expertise). And it helps you generate leads by capturing contact information.

Leverage technological horsepower: Since few folks are ready to buy on day one, you'll want to continue nurturing these new leads until the time is right. isn't right for everyone, given the skills and budget required, but lean on tools that will maximize your impact with minimal effort. Free or cheap tools like MailChimp and Constant Contact are your gateway to email marketing, and integrations with HubSpot's free CRM exist for both so you can effectively nurture your newly growing database.

'Sales' isn't a dirty word.

Not everyone is comfortable with the concept of selling, so even if you're not hammering the phone and dialing for dollars, there are plenty of ways to get a leg up in the sales process.

Bundle offerings: Unless you're laser-focused on a single thing (say, web design), your clients likely benefit from several of your capabilities. Few folks know what they want out of the gate, or worse, think they know what they want when they only understand a fraction of the puzzle or are keying in on a new buzzword. Agencies with a broad, comprehensive offering, for instance, should , to anchor an otherwise a la carte offering. Such action will help clients understand that individual point solutions are seldom the answer, and allow you, the agency owner, to customize while starting with a strong foundation. Consider your core competencies: Some examples include web development and maintenance, content and SEO, lead generation, etc.

Talk budget: Many agency owners shy away from numbers, , but they should reconsider: No one can make an informed decision while shopping without knowing prices any more than your website's visitors can seriously consider you without understanding the cost. You've started emphasizing your services as services by bundling them together; so, establishing a range of prices for those projects or retainers will help visitors self-qualify their interest. Not only will this give you a baseline to add or subtract services when you customize a proposal; it'll keep you from wasting time on bad-fit prospects from the beginning.

Align your next steps with people's readiness (or lack thereof) to purchase: By including different conversion opportunities on your site to ascertain a prospect's readiness, you'll understand when they're open to connecting. But the formal sales process still won't begin until someone initiates contact. You should be comfortable reaching out and running a thorough exploratory process to accurately assess a prospect's goals and challenges. With a clear understanding of where this person wants to go, you can pivot to explain how you would approach that scenario. That way, you can use the info provided to help the prospect understand the value of your services and the impact it might have on their goals. When the time is right, you can ask if the plan you've outlined sounds like the help that's needed and whether the prospect believes you're the right person before you draw up a proposal.

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Strategically walk away from projects: Not every customer is a perfect fit, so while walking away may feel like a letdown, it's important for the health of the agency that you know when to do just that. Prospects whose needs have a shaky alignment with your core offering or are simply troublesome create nightmares whose upside will be outweighed by the pain of managing the relationship. It's best therefore not to over-invest your time once red flags start waving. When they do, know when to cut your losses rather than go deeper into the rabbit hole.