

How to Increase Demand (aka Sell More)

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When organizations provide products and services that are wanted in their marketplace, they generally do well. But when market demand drops off, as happens when economies slow down or products become outdated, so do their sales and bottom-line results. What then? Should organizations downsize?

Maintain the status quo until demand returns? Or attempt to create new demand?

Many organizations give little attention to creating new interest for their products and services. Fortunately, for many, their offerings traditionally sell themselves well enough that they don't need to. They receive inquiries and orders without much effort. They do minimal marketing or business development. They may have sales personnel but their sales people often work more in the role of client support rather than business development. They answer questions, provide pricing, and submit quotes. They don't intentionally sell. They don't proactively pursue new clients, expand their offerings, or grow their markets.

Taking care of existing clients, answering questions, providing quotes, and taking orders is critically important and might be sufficient during times of prosperity, but not during economic downturns. Not when competent competitors exist in the market. Not when products and services stop selling themselves.

Unless organizations choose the option of downsizing, there inevitably comes a time when they must increase demand. They have to invest in something that improves what they do in their existing markets or creates new markets. They have to better differentiate themselves or make their differentiation better known.

Top performing organizations treat business development as high a priority as they do their operations. They create new opportunities as a process. They utilize a repeatable best-practice approach to creating demand through product innovation, sales, marketing, and business development activities. Rather than an occasional event, they engage in a continuous process of improving offerings, engaging with decision makers, and delivering compelling value propositions. Rather than be complacent with the business demand they have, they challenge their status quo. They find new ways to add value to their client base. They redeploy their resources as markets shift. They implement new initiatives that focus employees on external opportunities.

If creating demand and growing revenue are important to your organization, assess yourself in the five areas listed below. They are listed in priority order with what adds the most value to clients being the core priority. If you've ever been in the unfortunate position of trying to sell an uncompetitive offering, you know how important it is to start with the core priority—having a great product.

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Here are the five ways to increase demand for your offerings:

1. **Produce great products and services.** Provide competitive features and functionality. Develop offerings that are easy to install, use, maintain, and upgrade. Make them attractive, reliable, safe, and high quality. Make them so functionally satisfying that clients become your advocate, rate them high, promote them, and refer other buyers to them.
2. **Provide an exceptional client experience.** Be easy to work with and buy from. Provide expert help throughout the buying cycle from initial inquiry to fulfillment. Help prospects assess their solution alternatives. Provide pre-sale expertise that increases the value of the prospect's implementation. After purchase, provide excellent post-sale support.
3. **Craft compelling offers.** Provide appealing terms, conditions, and pricing options. Offer client-centric entry points, guarantees, and warranties. Package services with products. Include partner services and extensions. Provide solutions that help clients achieve their desired outcomes rather than individual products that leave the burden on clients to obtain their desired results.
4. **Deliver persuasive market messages.** Emphasize the value you deliver and the impact you provide in your market communications. Maintain compelling messaging in the marketing channels you own such as your physical locations, websites, and social media channels. Capture and communicate the positive feedback received from clients and partners.
5. **Promote your offerings.** Make your differentiation known beyond the online channels you own. Network and build relationships throughout your marketplace. Leverage partners and influencers. Attend social events. Present at industry events. Advertise. Implement marketing campaigns. Provide informational webinars and hands-on sessions such as "lunch-and-learns".

How well do your clients and prospects rate you in these five areas? Which area do you need to give more attention? What one action might you take in each area to improve the demand for your organization's offerings? Or, if interested in growing your organization on a consistent basis, give thought to how you might implement a repeatable best-practice based approach that sustains an ongoing focus on all five areas.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches (www.ScopeOfLeadership.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.AlpineLink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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