

When bookings get low, I often am asked what to do when friends and family have run out. "Where should we get the bookings from?" Here are some great answers thanks to Belinda Elsworth'sThe Success Express.<o:p></o:p>

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Beyond Family and Friends

by Sandra Maggio<o:p></o:p>

If you have ever felt like you have run out of people to talk to about your business, you are not alone. I think we all go through these periods in our careers. The secret is not to get stuck there. The simple answer lies in our contact list.

Your contact list is the lifeblood of your business! This list should be a never-ending list of people who are eager to talk to you, if you build it right. If you look at your company's products or services as a vehicle, and [hostesses] or customers as the fuel that runs the vehicle, you need to make sure there is plenty of reserve fuel to keep it running and in forward motion. There is a saying: "If you are not moving forward, you are moving backward." A growing contact list is the key to moving forward.

First of all, we all know the drill. Your list needs to be a list of everyone you know and can think of. I mean everyone from family members, friends, neighbors, business associates, professionals, business owners and teachers -- to the soccer coach, the dog groomer and the pest control guy.

We are not saying you have to contact them, just get them on the list. Their names may help jog your memory for someone you forgot to add. They may also be a good source of referrals. Carry this list with you at all times. Every time you meet someone new, get in the habit of adding their names to your list.

So, how do we meet new people to add to our list? One way is really easy. We treat our [direct sales or] MLM business like a real business and learn the importance of networking with others.

What is networking? It is the building of relationships with others who can help you to connect with their circle of influence. Your circle of influence is the people you know on a first-name basis and with whom you have credibility. Studies have shown that each of us has a circle of influence of about 250. They know this because the average funeral has 250 people in attendance. The idea is to get to them before you die!

People also like to do business with and refer business to people they know, like and trust. Wouldn't you rather get a friend's opinion about a movie or restaurant than relying on a critic or someone you don't know? If I need a professional, I first contact a friend for a referral, rather than scouring the yellow pages. You usually do the same.

By learning how to properly cultivate and build relationships that lead to referrals, you can count on a large portion of your contacts to come from this source. Therefore, your list should not only consist of potential customers and business builders, but also people who will be a good source of referrals. . . to help you identify a "model prospect."

Have you identified your "model prospect?" I have several ideas of a model prospect:

*How about the college-educated, corporately employed new mother on maternity leave? She doesn't want to go back to work, but she has a lifestyle to maintain.

*Or the corporate employee who breaks free to pursue the dream of her own business, only to go bankrupt a short time later.

*The "successful discontents," who finished college with a good job and high hopes to build a satisfying career, only to realize that corporate life isn't what they thought it would be.

*The retiree, who can't quite live the lifestyle he/she had planned for, due to stock market uncertainty.

Are you getting the picture?

Once you have identified them for yourself, it will make it easier for you and others to help you find qualified prospects. So, as they pursue their daily activities, they will know if someone they meet or know is a good lead for you.

The next important strategy for meeting new people is to position yourself in front of your model prospects. Where do your kinds of model prospects hang out? How about the health club, golf club, mom's morning out, at the kids' sporting activities and events?

To meet new people join clubs, organizations and associations such as the Chamber of Commerce in your area. Become a volunteer. It will make you feel good and you'll meet some great people! Everyone loves a volunteer.

Attend seminars to improve yourself, improve your finances and improve your health. Who is going to be there? Your model prospects! Consider joining or starting a business networking group. This consists of a group of people from various businesses and professions who meet weekly or biweekly for breakfast or lunch for the purpose of sharing leads. Once again, build relationships and train them to network for you. The secret to getting leads is to give leads first.

Meet more people by walking and talking. Did you know that 99 percent of us

recruit by accident? Imagine as you went about your daily business, errands and activities that you had a "recruit-on-purpose" attitude.

Prospects are everywhere: in line at the bank, at the grocery store, the post office, the gym, the coffee shop or deli and the doctor's office. A simple smile, comment or compliment can all bridge to a conversation.

These conversational openers are very effective for getting dialogue going with anyone. As the conversation progresses there are three great questions to keep in mind and use.

- * "So, what do you do for a living?"
- * "How long have you been doing that?"
- * "Do you like what you do?"

Their answers will provide vital information to help you, if you decide to approach them about your opportunity, product or service.

Complimenting someone on a service they provided or always provide is another way to solicit a conversation that can lead to an approach. A comment like "You are great at what you do -- you would be great in my business!" Or, "Have you ever thought of doing something alongside what you are doing to make extra income?" After you have complimented them, get their card or information and follow up with them as soon as possible.

The key to success here is to make sure you follow up! Many times I have [recruited] someone who had been approached before but the person had not followed up. Don't let them slip through your fingers.

The possibilities are endless for expanding your list of contacts. I have only scratched the surface, so I hope these few ideas can give you a good start.

Good luck and remember: Nothing happens unless you make it happen!