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TURNING PROSPECTS INTO CLIENTS

In his book *Marketing your services*, Anthony Putman describes marketing as “the intentional process of creating and maintaining the relationship of ‘customer’”.

For marketing to be effective it has to be consistent and sustained – in other words it has to become part of “business as usual”. Sporadic marketing or just “doing marketing” when you need to find new clients, simply does not work reliably so, if you cannot sustain it, you are probably better off not starting in the first place.

Turning prospects into clients requires you to adopt a range of strategies to ease them through the process. Whether you start with a “virtual” relationship through social media or your website or in a face-to-face environment, creating an effective “marketing funnel” is the key to generating a consistent flow of enquiries.

A typical marketing funnel’s starting point involves loading prospects into the top. Not all these, of course, will match your ideal client profile which is where segmentation helps you to focus your attention on those who are and fit your niche – your target prospects. The language you use on your website, for example, is a great way to help prospects to recognise your service is – or is not – aimed at them.

The next stage is to get those target prospects to become qualified prospects. These are the people who have said something or done something that tells you they are interested in your services or expertise. The most effective way to do this is to offer them something of value – for example, a downloadable guide to IHT or investment or managing risk – in return for leaving you their contact details.

Once they have done that, you effectively have their permission to nurture the relationship by offering them the option to receive regular communications from you such as your newsletter, occasional emails or your blog – provided of course they have the option to unsubscribe.

Regular communication with these qualified prospects is the most effective way to convert them into clients. By making them occasional offers of further “resources of value”, you enhance your reputation as a helpful expert, nurture the relationship and build trust as well as keeping your name front of mind for the time when the qualified prospect is ready to take action and seek advice.

It takes consistent effort, time and energy and this activity needs to be planned and scheduled otherwise – as we all know – other “stuff” will just get in the way.



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