Carlson's Laws of Marketing & Sales –

The 5+3 P's

Seems like I am forever quoting one of my "laws of marketing & sales" which of course are nothing more than the results of 30+ years experience -- i.e. offering insights into the "right way" based on having done it the wrong way myself!

So I wondered what would happen when I took those laws and actually tried to organize them...

Here goes, a little at a time!

Today's lesson: 5+3 P's...

The 5 aren't magical:

Prepare
Prospect
Pitch
Perform
Parlay

We'll dig into those...

The 3 sometimes SEEM magical in a world of "want it, want it now!":

Persistence
Persistence
Persistence

(And not to overdo the P's, but Patience is considered a subset of Persistence!).

630.854.8790
billc@kestrelmarketing.com

3775 Fairmont Court
Aurora, IL 60504

P #1: Prepare

Sorry, no shortcuts here… No "silver bullet" solutions… Suck it up, just gotta do the prep…

So… Identify a desirable "prospect constellation" and then be smarter than them.

For that to make sense, a necessary jump-ahead to the next topic of Prospecting for B2B marketing and sales people in particular: don't stop with just one prospect – look at a whole class of similar prospects. If what you offer works for one, it likely works for them all and whatever investment of time and money you make in pursuing one can be amortized across efforts to target them all. More on this in the next installment!

At the risk of the obvious, but mentioned because it's the first thing we try to shortcut, being smart means doing your homework – know as much as you can before going in, be as smart and even more current than your prospects about *their* market dynamics.

A little bit of knowledge can go a long way in the early interactions – your targets get less opportunity to be out in the trenches, are often less current than they would like to be (should be!) about their market and appreciate "free" information.

Treat prospects like customers (note: there's a second part to this later, can you guess what it is?) – as though you already have an assignment to assist them in some fashion. Do the legwork – online research into their vertical, their customers, competitors, issues, factors; look for relevant articles; if it's CPG, then walk the stores, and not just one store but a range of them. And do it all with purpose – absorb it, think about it, consider how to use what you learn to propose change to your prospects.

Make it a "team sport" – get others into the game, kick things around, benefit from the collective intelligence ("all of us are smarter than any of us!").

I vividly recall the meeting which drove this point home to me. Our team met with mid to upper-level marketing folks at a major CPG brand where we shared observations about what we saw at retail. Had them asking each other why they hadn't seen some of the things we presented and why they hadn't considered some of the brainstorming ideas we served up.

It was an effort which cost us maybe a day's time at most.

(Okay, confession time – we violated one of my laws by not leveraging this with others in the same category. Our bad.)

Next up – some thoughts on Prospecting!

P #2: Prospecting

Since we absorb things sequentially, it might seem here that Preparation is first and Prospecting second, and some would argue that's backward, but in reality the two intertwine…

To know a prospect IS a prospect requires some work in the "Prepare" category – learning something about potential prospects in order to decide they are prospects and if so, why.

Of course, once you've seen enough to feel good that you've picked some good targets, then you dig in to the next layer of homework. And when you do that you sometimes find that you will uncover other possibilities for targeting, and you'll go a couple of rounds of Preparation and Prospecting.

So roll with me here... after you read this post, you can parallel process Preparation and Prospecting…

Two key points to Prospecting:

- "Prospect Constellation"
- "The Rhythm Thing"

As mentioned earlier, identify a "constellation of prospects".

You may have good reasons for targeting a *particular* prospect – e.g. you know someone, or you know someone who knows someone, or you "hear" that a company is unhappy with their current supplier, or whatever. All good reasons, no argument there.

But with that comes a presumption, often faulty by the way, that having info like that simplifies your investment and increases your odds of success. Sure, takes a few of the initial steps out of the process but you can't take anything for granted no matter how much of a supposed edge you think you have.

So make the investment in getting smart (Prepare) but don't limit your thinking to *only* the one target you have in mind.

Approaching multiple players in a similar category (a "constellation") allows you to get smarter about the category while at the same time getting smarter about each of the prospects. Challenges will be similar and each conversation makes you smarter for the next one – the more you hear, the smarter you are. (Twice around to each target and you're getting close to being the resident expert!)

(Of course *not* *suggesting any sharing of confidential information here – just benefitting from hearing what everyone says, evolving your perspective of the marketplace these prospects compete in and then being able to consider the best way(s) to approach them all with your unique value proposition.)*

And then there’s what I call “the rhythm thing.”

Accomplished by treating prospects like customers… *(for those who saw this earlier, another teaser: the other half of this philosophy is to treat customers like prospects – more on that later.)*

Be in a rhythm of communication. Make it feel like there is already a relationship by delivering value in your communications, showing that you know their market, their competition, their customers, etc., and providing them with information and professional insights along the way. Just like you would with a current customer!

And here’s a place where at least one, perhaps two of the 3 P’s for Persistence comes into play …

In a world where patience (yes, avoided the tempatation to capitalize that P word!) seems to shrink daily, there’s always some resistance to investing the time and energy suggested in the comments above. Everyone is looking for quick success, the “silver bullet” which provides instant results for limited effort.

Maybe you get lucky and call on the one target who is ready to move immediately – that’s great but typically unlikely.

The ROI associated with sticking with an ongoing relationship-building process may take some time to be realized – depending on the product or service, it could be months or even years. However, when opportunities with targeted prospects arise, this process insures that you will KNOW about it before others, you will UNDERSTAND it better than others, and your competition will look *late* and *slow* as they attempt to catch up.

The trick, which we can explore later, is finding efficient ways to stay in touch, to be visible without being pushy, to be top-of-mind at the right time for the right reasons…

Next up, P #3: The Pitch!

P #3(a): The Pitch

It turns out that there’s a lot to say about the pitch itself, so we’ll break it up a bit…

Here are the key points:

- “Never confuse selling with delivery”
- Sales meetings are like a play, everyone has a role and needs to play it
  - Don’t over-sell
  - Don’t solve the problem in the sales meeting
  - Sell what they want to buy, sell more later
- Ignore all the seminars/webinars – it IS about price, it’s ALWAYS about price

“Never confuse selling with delivery”

Credit to Bill Slavik from way back (WAY back…) – a comment made to me very early in my career and one that I’ve repeated often…

There are times when you need to sell beyond your capabilities, sometimes without anything more than a rough idea of how you will deliver on your promise – and yes, this is a good thing.

This stretches your organization into developing new skills, new services. Or considering how to align yourself with others who can provide the incremental service without having to do it internally.

This is valuable when the stretch is a small part of a larger program, or the capability is judged to be something which should appeal to other customers and prospects. Of course, the challenge is drawing a line.

Some new capabilities might be considered a worthy addition to the core offering, something new to be promoted itself, something which fits the overall value proposition and would appeal to the same customer audience. Others may be secondary – added simply to leverage a client relationship, perhaps supporting primary (core) competencies, but not your organization’s selling focus. Either way, what’s the level of commitment necessary and what’s the risk?

Sometimes it’s obvious that you’re stretching TOO far – a clear lack of fit, too much money or time necessary to get up to speed, a perception of limited long-term benefits. To exaggerate, a marketing agency would not be advised to sell IT services

Regardless, the point is to not limit the selling activity too early in the process based solely on what you do today – use opportunities that stretch the organization as a means to identifying how to grow.

A sales meeting is like a play – everyone has a role, needs to stick to the script, play their parts

How the members of a team making a pitch interact is as varied as the organization, its culture, and the individuals themselves, but in front of a prospect (and a client!), everyone needs to respect the roles.

Clients (current *and* prospective) want to see comfort and confidence in how a team works together but they also need to understand who performs what functions and there needs to be respect by everyone for everyone else.

Individuals who work together often will develop a rhythm and style which works well for them day-to-day but that familiarity can also lead to crossing lines – introducing too much insider joking, humor based on personal interactions and worst of all falling prey to stereotypes like “sales guys don’t know how to do the work”, “account guys just push paper”, “creative is the most important thing.” Attempts at humor or competing to be the one with a great idea in a selling meeting, especially in front of people you are just getting to know, call into question the respect people feel for each other. And the audience, consciously or not, picks up on that…

There is a script for selling meetings, each person should know their role, when to contribute, how to contribute, but most importantly, understanding to err on the side of less rather than more. Of course, this is not to suggest total inflexibility – don’t interpret this in the extreme – just a reminder to everyone participating to consider how this comes across…

It’s important to understand that each person on the selling side of the table thinks a little differently and may convey the same points in a different way, in a different order, but your audience only needs to hear it once. The presentation needs to flow naturally *for the presenter(s)* -- they will come across more natural and confident because it is *their* way, it follows *their* thought process -- and everyone needs to realize that everything will get covered, so no need for people to jump ahead or rehash the same points (other than based on audience comments and questions, of course).

And finally, there needs to be someone in charge of the meeting -- the play's "director", if you stick with the analogy -- controlling the rhythm and pace, and everyone needs to follow that leader and his/her cues.

More to come…

P #3(b): The Pitch (continued…)

Since there was so much to say about the Pitch, we broke it up a bit…

As a reminder, here are the key points we want to make:

- "Never confuse selling with delivery"
- Sales meetings are like a play, everyone has a role and needs to play it
    - Don't over-sell
    - Don't solve the problem in the sales meeting
    - Sell what they want to buy, sell more later
- Ignore all the seminars/webinars – it IS about price, it's ALWAYS about price

In our last post, we learned to not confuse selling with delivery (have you found yourself saying it yourself, yet? you will eventually… ☺) and then got as far as talking about sales meetings being like a play and what that means in terms of the roles of all the players. Now let's talk about some specifics…

Don't over-sell

Salespeople may consider this obvious but for the benefit of others who participate in the selling process, there's a tendency to want to "pile on" with more information than is needed to close an opportunity. This is particularly true when there are multiple people participating in the pitch – the lead in the meeting should be someone who understands this and how to read the audience, when to push and when to back off… But others on the selling side of the table may not be as experienced and they will sometimes feel compelled to add more. (Stick to the "script" and respect the "director!")

Since they're driven by good intentions and have everyone's best interests at heart, it's hard to find fault. But you do need to stop, take stock of the situation, ask for the business or since that rarely happens at the sales meeting anyway, at least measure your probabilities of success. Decide if there's value-added in providing more information or if you run the risk of overkill and losing audience interest.

So… Provide only the minimum necessary to secure the opportunity. Once there's a positive reaction, shift from persuasion to confirmation, from selling to next steps. Start acting like the deal is done.

Don't solve the problem in the sales pitch

Ever hear someone on the selling side say "I've got a great idea", "Already have it figured out", "I've already got an idea in mind"?

And then wonder “what does a client figure they’re paying for?”

The bravado in making such a claim may be meant to reinforce confidence in the mind of the prospect but it’s really more about being perceived as a hero in the meeting and should be a punishable offense. Ego issues like that can undermine the relationship before it even gets started.

A client who hears this will wonder about the breadth and depth of the effort – will you do the proper work or take a short-cut based on one meeting, and if someone makes it sound easy, the client may be left wondering if you truly “get it” (even if you do, even if the solution is straightforward).

This is especially true if you’re claiming you adhere to a “proprietary process” – how could anyone in a sales meeting actually have the best and final idea in mind without following the process? The pitch is *about* the process and you should show your confidence that the process will yield results – that’s what case studies are all about.

And we’ll stop here… – still *more* to come about the Pitch!

P #3(c): The Pitch

(the last part of it, we promise!)

Wow! More to say about the Pitch than we thought!

Worthy of the space, we think, since of course it is the most important step in the process – the first opportunity to speak specifically to a prospect’s needs and interests and an opportunity to build rapport. Also the riskiest step because there are multiple parties on both sides with different expectations, experience and interests…

So, we’ve made most of these key points:

- “Never confuse selling with delivery”
- Sales meetings are like a play, everyone has a role and needs to play it
  - Don’t over-sell
  - Don’t solve the problem in the sales meeting
  - Sell what they want to buy, sell more later
- Ignore all the seminars/webinars – it IS about price, it’s ALWAYS about price

In our last post, we cautioned against over-selling and suggested not to solve problems in the sales meeting. So now let’s wrap up our comments about the Pitch.

Sell what they want to buy now, sell more stuff later

Can’t sell someone what they’re not interested in buying.

“Duh”, you say?

We think it’s often helpful to translate a business situation into how we act on personal matters, so imagine having your car’s oil changed and they pitch you on replacing your tires? We might actually need tires but if we’re not in that zone, then it’s wasted effort and a risk of a customer feeling pushed.

So why, then, do we feel compelled to toss everything into our pitches?

Our earlier comments about “don’t over-sell” include trying to sell more than what you’re being considered for.

Yes, there are those who will load up the pitch to test for additional opportunities and we’re not suggesting an overly-limited discussion. But prospects tend not to hear anything other than what’s relevant to their most immediate needs. If you’re a marketing agency being considered for advertising but capable of packaging design, beware of the mindset of your audience who will focus on the advertising elements of your pitch while comments about packaging wash over them.

In fact, serving up too many capabilities too early in the process may (often!) beg the painful question of “well, what are you best at?” That’s a whole post by itself, eh?

This continues to prove itself unfortunately true – how many of you have a client who one day mentions they’re getting some product or service from elsewhere which you are able to provide? And when you mention that, they say “we didn’t know you did that…”

It’s our job to help our clients “remember” everything we do but the next two P’s are “Perform” and “Parlay” – in that order for a reason. Get the first deal and deliver something positive (Perform) before trying for the next opportunity (Parlay)!

"Duh", you say (again)?

Well, we've seen plenty of evidence of attempts (couched in language like "be an aggressive salesperson") to try to force too much to happen too quickly -- so while it may strike us as common sense here, experience suggests behavior to the contrary...

We’ll hit those topics in upcoming posts – and if you’re keeping up, the idea of "treat your customers like prospects" was mentioned earlier and perhaps now you can see where it will come in to the thinking!

It IS about price, it’s ALWAYS about price!

Lots of commentary (entire sales training exercises!) out there about how to make the sales process and your pitch in particular about anything BUT price.

And yet those of us who have provided many proposals over the years know that prospects (and clients!) flip to the last page to see the budget before reading anything about the process or deliverables.

We think, anecdotally, that it’s about having a financial frame of reference by which to judge the product or process. Again looking at things we do personally, when we’re buying a car we gravitate toward brands that we know sell in our price range – nice to hear all about the quality of a Mercedes but wasted on someone who can afford a Chevrolet.

Of course, a pitch should not be about price, not arguing that. But no matter what we do, the decision inevitably is – and everything else we do to sell products or services is about making our price worth it.

So we feel that there’s no point in hiding the price, no point in deferring that discussion (disclosure!) until you “get the buying signals” and in fact, maybe some potential harm in doing so – prospects can’t actually interpret the benefits you offer until they know they can afford them…

Finally, the team needs to understand they may be selling (directly *and* indirectly) to one or more contributors to the decision and some points of contact may need to defend their decisions to others. So if you are deprived of the opportunity to be F2F with higher powers (in particular, the “final” decision-maker, if there is such a thing), you need to imagine your sales effort is also targeted at them! So there needs to be a clear reason for the price and the sales team needs to provide a prospect with “tools” s/he can use internally to rationalize why s/he might consider and recommend a higher-priced resource.

Whew! Done with the Pitch!

"Finally!", you say!

Well, there are probably 10 posts worth of sub-topics but we'll resist the temptation and move on next to "Perform" and "Parlay"...

P #4: Perform

We spent so much time on the Pitch that we thought we should re-orient ourselves...

So to refresh your memory and reset our progress, here are the "5+3P's" that make up our marketing and sales "laws":

The 5 are:

Prepare
Prospect
Pitch
Perform
Parlay

We've hit Prepare, Prospect and REALLY hit Pitch (sorry, but that's a biggie!)...

And the 3 are:

Persistence
Persistence
Persistence

We invoked one or two of those along the way, but more on that later as well.

So now we're moving on to "Perform."

Under-sell, over-deliver

The first transaction – the first time they spend and you deliver – is critical for all the obvious reasons. Might not lose the client over problems with the first program but a lackluster first effort is a lost opportunity to earn that positive first impression. And makes the second program, if there IS one, even more important AND challenging…

The old adage is an old adage for a reason. There may be ways in which you can imagine doing more, delivering more, making a splash with the first project – so do it, but don't talk about it.

If you don't over-commit *to the client*, you don't have to explain (defend!) falling short of that over-commitment! Focus on the promised deliverables, over-invest internally to double-check the quality, be as on-target as you can….

But don't make a promise that you don't need to make! Sure, make a commitment internally to strive for something beyond the client's expectations – it's good for the client and it gets the staff into the game – but as soon as you share your aspirations with the client, you may as well have included it in your commitments. Customers may not (really never do) separate the actual commitments from the "reach" so, "walk the walk" and skip "talk the talk."

BUT ABOVE ALL…

<u>Give them what they ask for before giving them more!</u>

Nothing worse than thinking you're smarter than the client, believing you have a "better idea" and delivering that without giving what was asked for… Sometimes our experience, our instincts, our confidence in what we know gets in the way, so always remember to honor customer interests and expectations first, even if you think they're wrong… and then by all means feel free to show off with your additional thoughts.

But sometimes things go sideways...

Customers aren't <u>always</u> right but they're usually right enough

No matter how smart you are, perhaps even smarter than your customer, "the customer is always right" is yet another old adage with a foundation in reality.

It's interesting to see staff react to negative feedback from clients. Maybe it's good that they're offended because it means they care but getting defensive can block the message. Clients aren't frustrated or angry just for the sport of it, so analyze the situation (with an open mind!) and you will often find that even if there is some gray area, there's usually enough right about their perceptions to at least warrant some consideration.

Use it as a learning experience – in general for your business and in particular for the client. If you ARE smarter than the client, then you should be smart enough to adapt your process and how you manage that client to achieve success.

No matter what the personal reactions may be to an unhappy client, their unhappiness is your fault – or if you adopt a more positive perspective, it's your opportunity… your opportunity to respond positively, to demonstrate improvements, to build the relationship based not on the unhappiness of some project but rather the success of your response to adversity.

Probably goes without saying that poor performance is the best way out of a relationship but you need to distinguish between the one-time major issues, most of which are survivable (well, maybe AFTER the first program!), versus ongoing smaller issues.

Big issues get resolved in big ways, and “%^$&* happens” to us all, so there’s often some leniency and forgiveness provided you respond well – quickly, without hesitation, without regard to cost, emphasis on program success and client satisfaction. And hopefully earning the privilege of continuing the relationship because they have concrete evidence that you have THEIR interests at heart – that you are a committed and indispensable partner.

However, watch out for those little irritants which accumulate over time – eventually the client connects those dots and sees a pattern, and that can kill you. It may appear as though the client gets really upset one day over what you perceive to be a small issue but what you may be missing is the many OTHER small issues which preceded it. (Was trying to avoid another old saw about “the straw that broke the camel’s back” but it’s just so apropos here – with apologies…).

Stay in touch, make sure there are multiple lines of communication open with the client, stay close to your team and get their input. Do whatever you can to identify and eliminate the small stuff which is, typically, controllable. Have regular team meetings to discuss how to improve service and develop further opportunities.

Much more could be explored on this, but we’ll exercise unusual restraint and stop here!

Next up is the final P of the 5 P’s: Parlay – leveraging your success to beget more success…

P #5: Parlay

Merriam-Webster.com’s definition 2a:

“to increase or otherwise transform into something of much greater value.”

Achieve some success before asking for more opportunities!

The assumption in Merriam-Webster’s definition is that you have something to start with – something that you can increase or transform.

When it comes to a new client, the first and most important opportunity is to establish “something to start with.” And yet there’s a tendency among some to want to start digging for more business as soon as the first deal is signed.

The intention is right, but be careful about the timing…

Would you commit to being a regular customer at a restaurant without first having a meal? Common sense suggests not.

To be clear (and to minimize critique from those interpreting this argument in the extreme), keeping eyes and ears open is not the issue. And we’re not saying “never ever” since timing of some opportunities may dictate more aggressive action.

But as a general rule, it’s easier to ask for new challenges once you have demonstrated your abilities to deliver (whatever it is you deliver).

(BTW: “new client” might be an entirely new organization or simply a change in your primary point of contact – we think the same principles suggested here apply to both!)

That being said, if the first commitment or program happens to be something large with long timeframes, then identify some opportune milestones in the timeline where you can feel good about having been successful in delivery. Something tangible, something that the client connects with you. Begin to build your track-record of being reliable, honoring your commitments, delivering quality in everything you do.

And then by all means, consider what more you might be doing for this new client.

Which leads to the next point…

Treat your prospects like customers *<u>and your customers like prospects</u>*

We touched on the first part in an earlier post and we’ll hit it again in a future post about the 3 remaining P’s (Persistence, Persistence, Persistence!), but the second part comes in to play once you’re past that initial “get to know you” program.

It’s all too easy to fall into “farmer” mode with existing clients – servicing them in a reactive fashion, being responsive to requests, treating them as important. But we can begin to take them for granted and we stop looking at them as prospects – i.e. we stop the “hunter” process.

Not good.

First, of the three opportunities a company has available to them for growth, existing customers are the easiest to identify and the easiest (most economical!) to get to. (We’ll cover the other two later…)

Existing customers should be looked at regularly, studied in the exact same fashion as suggested in our earlier posts on “Prepare” and “Prospect.” In fact, if someone else is doing that homework and you’re not, then your relationship is in jeopardy.

Second, a customer bought something from you but as suggested in our post on “The Pitch”, their attention was focused on their needs of the moment. We advocated tracking with those interests and minimizing attempts to push too much more of your capabilities at that point – “Sell what they want to buy now, sell more stuff later.”

So once it’s “later” it’s your job to “remind” a customer of what else you can do for them – and NOT the other way around!

Don’t be caught unaware of a client turning elsewhere for products or services that you could have provided – and hearing “gee, we didn’t know you did that…”.

On some regular basis you need to provide your existing clients with your sales pitch, though perhaps not directly. E-mail newsletters (e.g. market info relevant to them), announcements about accomplishments, and other outreach tactics which get your breadth of capabilities visible to them.

Hold quarterly get-togethers to review the relationship while at the same time seeking ways in which to build on it.

Commit to yourself (and your customer) that you invest some % of your revenue from them back into efforts on their behalf. For example, invest in competitive reviews without being asked. Invest in some "spec" concepting to spur discussion and share your thinking. Maybe even ask them from time to time how they suggest you make your investment.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a member of the business development function (sales!) needs to be a part of the client service team. You need that "hunter" mentality constantly in the mix, someone who lives the life of, and is rewarded for, uncovering and pursuing opportunities. Someone practicing the Prepare and Prospect principles suggested earlier.

Because someone else is.

Next: The "+3 P's"

Whew!

The 5 P's we covered are a process, not necessarily rocket science by themselves but powerful when applied…

Which leads to "the rhythm thing" – like all good marketing and sales programs, it's about a consistent commitment to the program.

And that's where our next post on "Persistence, Persistence, Persistence" comes in!

The “+3 P’s” -- The Most Important Things in Marketing & Sales are Persistence, Persistence, Persistence

We’ve introduced the idea of the “5+3 P's” and explored the “5 P’s.” They aren't magical individually but powerful when understood, appreciated, embraced and applied in a consistent, committed fashion:

Prepare
Prospect
Pitch
Perform
Parlay

And we mentioned that the “+3” can SEEM magical:

Persistence
Persistence
Persistence

We said it before but it bears repeating: there are no shortcuts, no “silver bullet” solutions to successful marketing & sales efforts.

In today’s fast-paced world of business, nothing happens fast enough or large enough to satisfy us so we think that we *should* be doing whatever it is we’re *not* doing. But if we fall prey to that thinking too frequently, we’re just flopping unsuccessfully between strategies and tactics.

We come up with some new idea, decide to “give it a shot” and a few days later someone is asking why it’s not working. (Okay, perhaps there’s *some* exaggeration for effect, but not much!)

We evaluate a strategy and our efforts too quickly, without allowing the time needed to yield results. Then we judge the current approach a failure and flop to something else.

The issue is one of expectations... create unrealistic expectations and you program yourself for *seeing* failure. And note that the same results might be considered a success in someone else’s eyes…

Start by creating realistic, reasonable expectations – and not just regarding objectives but also timing. For example, if your product or service is something purchased infrequently, it’s unlikely that anything you do will yield immediate major success (e.g. marketing agencies won’t find major re-branding opportunities every day, large capital equipment suppliers won’t find replacement opportunities regularly). Depending on your product or service, it might take months, even a year or more, of cultivating relationships with prospects before converting any to customers.

In that case, establishing a regular communication program with prospects – e.g. quarterly e-newsletters – might not immediately connect with a sale, but clearly serves the purpose of keeping you top-of-mind when opportunities arise. So you can’t judge that tactic a failure after publishing two e-newsletters with zero sales conversion!

Why has it become so challenging for anyone to have a plan, commit to it, stay focused on it? Tough economy, limited spending and hungry competitors combine to make us nervous. Overload of information and input combined with immediate gratification technologies speeds things up to the point where we sometimes don’t appreciate how little time has elapsed between two conversations.

And constantly emerging tactics – in particular digital tactics like e-newsletters, blogs, mobile marketing, social media options and more – all seem to have merit and if we’re not using them ASAP, we feel left behind.

How does Persistence pay off?

So how does it pay off to stick with an approach? Let’s explore that in context of the 5 P’s…

Persistence in Preparation – Sticking with a strategic approach to being as smart as you can be about a product category and the players in it will make you an “expert” even before making the first sale in it! Investing in being that expert translates to being able to sit in front of a prospect with the confidence of knowing that you are probably as smart as they are about their market, maybe even smarter than they are about their competitors. And don’t we all want to work with experts?

Persistence in Prospecting – We’ll expand on this in a future post but in a nutshell, don’t stop. There’s a tendency to quickly move on if we get a lack of enthusiasm in meeting us, returning our calls, or being passed over for some opportunity. Business is cyclic – people will change jobs, change companies, and the relationships will evolve over time. No magic to this, really – if you decide 10 attempts is enough, remember that someone else is thinking 20. And stopping at any point is a waste of the investment that got you smart enough to pursue them – take advantage of it!

Persistence in the Pitch – Maybe a little less relevant to the Pitch but still, be open to ways in which to improve it – e.g. keep it fresh, add new case studies, evolve your story.

Persistence in Performance – Well, that’s pretty intuitive but it can be all too easy to grow complacent with the way you do things, to take parts of the process for granted, to want to cut a corner here or there because you know it shouldn’t matter. Not arguing here against a commitment to proven processes – just a reminder to apply them in a consistent, high-quality fashion – *every time!*

Persistence in Parlay – “Treat your customers like prospects.” To which we now add “always.” Find that rhythm of constantly educating them about what you do and what’s new about you. Don’t stop simply because it hasn’t yielded anything – a competitor who is intent on finding their entre’ to that client certainly won’t!

So… that’s a lot to digest – break time!

In the next post we’ll try to connect all the dots…

Carlson's Laws of Marketing & Sales – Why They Should Be 3+5P's

The "5+3 P's":

Prepare
Prospect
Pitch
Perform
Parlay

plus…

Persistence
Persistence
Persistence

In reality, however, we probably should make this the 3+5 P's…

Not to overdo the idea of there being "laws" for the marketing and selling process but we will draw a connection – laws may sound individual and specific to a situation, but in reality they are part of a system. Stopping at a red light may stand on its own as a law but *all* of the "rules of the road" need to work together to bring whatever sanity there is to driving…

Same applies here – we think you're better off embracing *any* of our thinking even if it's piecemeal, or applying any preferred thinking which fits you better, but one thing we're sure of is that success comes from a commitment to consistent (persistent!) application of whatever "laws" you decide on.

We used the word Persistence because it suggests action – in particular a *proactive* connotation – but we considered playing with Patience as well. Because you need that too, though we think it's implied in Persistence.

As a society, professionally and personally, we've programmed ourselves into a variety of behaviors which are creating challenges to us all.

Expectations of immediate everything works both ways – we want what we want when we want it and become frustrated when we can't have it immediately while at the same time we're stressing because someone else wants something from us immediately and we can't do everything all at once.

We're running lean companies, asking more contribution from less people, feeling the competitive heat, uncertainty about the future weighing on our minds, so we're trying to minimize unproductive efforts, cut corners where we can, and think there's something easier than whatever it is we're doing now. So we try something new and… of course… expect it to work immediately. See the infinite loop there?

So the laws themselves as suggested here are likely to be thought of as being fundamental – and that would be right. The magic today, the "silver bullet" everyone is seeking, isn't something new but rather a return to tried and true.

Commitment to processes; commitment to quality; understanding (acknowledging!) the realities and constraints of time, people, resources; recognizing the need to stick with something long enough to be successful. Sounds silly, but when we plant a fruit tree we don't come back the very next day expecting a harvest!

And you would also be right to think there's more to it than what we've covered. In particular, leadership, role models, corporate culture, acknowledging accomplishments and learning from failures rather than ignoring victories and punishing defeats.

Also necessary elements to a successful process, but beyond our scope here (though hmmm… we see another topic for later!).

We touched on this to some extent, but in our next series of posts we'll expand on the idea of "treat your customers like prospects and your prospects like customers." We've found this simple philosophy works pretty well to shape our thinking and not just about marketing and sales but also how it factors into corporate culture and growth.

Stay tuned!