

ENTERPRISE

From the June 17, 2005 print edition

Sales solutions

Establish your credibility as an expert in the field

[Andrea Sittig-Rolf](#)

Question: I work for a large company and while they do a lot of advertising and have great brand awareness, it's not enough to position me as a specialist in my field. I've been a sales professional for 10 years in the same industry. What can I do personally, above and beyond my company's efforts, that will communicate to my prospects that I am the best salesperson for them to work with and can offer the best solution to meet their needs?

Answer: I will share with you now, in just 15 words, what it took me 15 years to learn. You must establish credibility with your prospects to be considered an expert in your field. Then, and only then, should you even think about trying to sell them something.

So, how do you do that? You write, speak and help others. In this week's edition of Sales Solutions, I will describe why writing is one of the best things you can do to establish credibility with your prospects and customers. Then, look for the July 1 edition of Sales Solutions to learn how speaking and helping others will position you to establish credibility as well.

Write articles, columns, newsletters, books, whatever you can write, write. Research newspapers and trade magazines that don't currently cover your particular area of expertise and approach the editor with your idea to provide an article or column. With Internet blogs and other types of online media, you'd be surprised how much space is actually available in newspapers and magazines that could be filled with your ideas. Many editors are open to new ideas and are often looking for something fresh to add to their publication.

Also, while your company may provide a newsletter to its customers, there is no reason why you can't provide your own newsletter to your prospects and customers. Keep in mind that newsletters should provide value-added content and not be a way in which you blatantly advertise your products and services.

The long-term effect of writing good newsletters is that prospects and customers remember you and consider you an expert, therefore will contact you when they have a need. Newsletters can be one of the best forms of subtle advertising if they're done right.

Write a book. Have you ever thought about writing a book? It probably sounds daunting, but when you truly are an expert in your field, and with at least 10 years of experience in the same industry, you could easily fill the pages of a great book with your ideas and strategies. Before you begin, buy the book "The Shortest Distance Between You and a Published Book: 20 Steps to Success" (Broadway Books, 1997). In it, author Susan Page details 20 steps from

idea to publication and outlines realistic time frames to help you with the process of getting a book published.

If you're serious about writing a book, you'll also want to pick up a copy of the "2005 Writer's Market" (Writer's Digest Books, 2005). This book is a fabulous resource that provides information about getting started, specific information for beginning writers, interviews, the business of writing, literary agents, book publishers, small presses, consumer magazines, trade journals, as well as contests and awards.

Stay tuned to learn why speaking, and helping others, will also position you as an expert in your field and establish credibility with your prospects and customers.

ANDREA SITTIG-ROLF is a public speaker, author, and president of Sittig Northwest, Inc., a sales training and consulting firm. Her new book, "Business to Business Prospecting: Innovative Techniques to Get Your Foot in the Door with Any Prospect" will be published in August (Aspatore Books). Reach her at 206-769-4886, www.sittignw.com, or info@sittignw.com. © 2005 American City Business Journals Inc.