

Sales Solutions 6.9.06

I am a professional speaker on the topics of sales, marketing, and P.R. The nature of my business requires extensive travel and because of this I find it difficult to find time to make cold calls or generate new business while I'm on the road. What suggestions do you have to continue to build my business and find new clients while traveling on business?

The key to growing your business while traveling on business is to plant yourself in a prospect rich environment when you're not in the midst of a speaking engagement. For example in your case, when you're on the road but not actually doing a speaking gig and have other work to do, such as email or writing you might do in preparation of your speaking engagements, sit in the lobby of your hotel to do your work, preferably as close to the main entrance door as possible. For you a prospect rich environment is where sales and marketing professionals congregate. Think about it, how often have you been to a hotel where a sales convention is going on? More than once I bet!

So, as you're sitting in the lobby of the hotel minding your own business and working away on your blackberry or laptop computer, you will start to overhear conversations from others in the lobby. If the hotel where you're staying is sponsoring a sales conference, you're in luck!

Chances are you'll start to hear some of the sales reps from the conference talking about the workshops and seminars they attended during the conference. It's easy to make small talk with people in that environment because it's a social setting and salespeople by nature like to talk. By making small talk with the salespeople you'll learn more about the company they represent, which may be a prospect for you. By learning from the salespeople what their company typically does in terms of hiring speakers, you'll be able to position yourself as someone to be considered for a future sales conference or program you might facilitate at their office.

Ask questions of the salespeople you meet such as what they thought of the programs provided and speakers that were involved at the conference. What did they like? What didn't they like? What topics would they be most interested in for future conferences? Be sure to get a business card from the salespeople you meet and ask them who you should connect with at their company to discuss the possibility of your providing a seminar or workshop. Often if you can get the salespeople you're talking with excited about your topic, they will do the work for you by championing you to their manager or whoever makes the decision regarding speakers and workshop leaders.

I had a recent experience using this technique while on business in Louisville, KY. The hotel where I was staying was sponsoring a conference for a major software distributor and two salespeople of the manufacturers who attended the conference were waiting for a cab in the lobby as I was typing away on my laptop. (This is why I suggest sitting close to the main entrance of the lobby where salespeople typically gather because they're waiting for a cab or to meet up with other colleagues.) After starting a conversation with them I soon learned their company did something similar internally to the Blitz training program I provide, but that they could be better at it by having better prospecting techniques. Long story short, I basically empowered the salesperson I met to champion me to the national marketing manager of his company and within 2 weeks of meeting him that day in the hotel lobby, I received an email from the national marketing manager of his company requesting a meeting with me to learn more about my Blitz programs.

The crucial element to using this technique successfully is to get the salespeople you meet excited about what you're doing so they'll bring it to their manager for you. In addition to getting the business card of the salespeople you meet this way, ask for the name and phone number of their manager or other decision makers involved in hiring someone in your position, and write it on the back of their card. Follow up with the decision maker shortly after meeting the salesperson and use that salesperson as a reference. The sooner you make the follow up call, the better chance you'll have of getting to the next step with the decision maker, in case he asks the salesperson who referred you about you.

This technique will help you make the most of your non-speaking time while traveling on business. Chances are you have other work to do and rather than doing it in your room where you have no chance of meeting anyone new, by simply working from the lobby and putting yourself in a place where your prospects gather, you leverage those new contacts to do the prospecting for you!

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