

Finding Your First Customer

Coaching Questions

Are you creating the right impression?

- Confidence is the most common challenge for an entrepreneur with a new business idea. One of the best ways to get confidence is to land that first sale. After one, it all becomes easier. Come up with creative ways to get the first sale through volunteering, pilot programs, heavily discounting your services in the first 6 months, or offering free trials.
- Making a connection is difficult as in the beginning everything is about your business and there is a lot of stress. Sometimes it takes a deep breath and just relaxing a bit that helps build the connection that you need.
- Capability is something that is more difficult for younger entrepreneurs or individuals with less education, as customers naturally assume that age and education adds credibility. There are some other ways to display your credibility including testimonials, case studies, client lists, awards, and even showing someone a professional contract.

Are you talking to the right people?

- Qualified customers are ones that are as close to being ideal as possible, and they are definitely in the right range. If you spend time speaking with someone who is interested, but doesn't have a budget, they are not qualified and it is a waste of time!
- Create a list of specific and direct questions that will help to determine if someone is a good customer for you very quickly. Sometimes it is the hard questions, like 'how much is this worth to you?' or 'is this a top concern for your company right now?' that helps you fire a prospect and save yourself time.
- Many individuals find it difficult to say 'no' to a sales person. They don't realize that by continuing to feign interest they are actually wasting your time. Knowing who is qualified and doing your best to qualify a prospect early will save you a lot of time.

How are you getting leads today? How are you planning on doing this as you grow?

- When an entrepreneur starts they often resort to marketing to their friends and family first. The average individual knows 250 people, so this is a good place to start but this lead source may eventually dry up.
- Another way to get leads is to actively push referrals. This is to incent your own circle of acquaintances to get you in front of strangers. You can do this through;
 - Explaining your business to friends using anecdotes rather than a pitch
 - Referral fees or gift cards
 - Thank you gifts that are unexpected
 - Thank you cards
 - Customer appreciation events
- Online marketing offers many different opportunities to build customer lists. Many websites offer free newsletters, coupons, or emails to gather a prospect's contact information. Make sure that you pay attention to privacy laws when doing this!
- There are many directories (both online and offline) where you can find customer information. This can be in the form of a physical address, email address, fax number, or phone number. Many of these can be accessed through your local library, small business centre, or online. With privacy laws and the 'no call list', there are more regulations surrounding this that need to be paid attention to.

What is your plan to improve how you are selling?

- Rate what part of your sales technique is currently the great weakness. Is it your impression or who you are talking to?
- Come up with a plan of attack to improve the weakest part of your sales approach.
- Celebrate once you have your first sale!