Generating Leads for On-Site Programs

Knowing "how to sell" on-site programs is a valuable skill set. But it's dependent on one critical factor – having a decision maker to whom to sell! So if you wear a selling hat, and unless you already have more potential leads than you can handle, one of your top priorities is generating leads.

I sold on-site programs for ten years and have been working with other colleges for over two decades. Here are the **top 5 missed opportunities** I have seen and experienced to generate high potential leads.

#1: Say it on everything. "You can have this program offered on-site" (or similar wording) should appear in neon lights on everything you publish -- home page, front and back covers of brochures, postcards, emails. Make NO assumptions that businesses know you can do almost any T&D they need. Tell them repeatedly and make it obvious that you want their business.

#2: Ask for referrals: When you are talking with clients and contacts on the phone or with participants in your programs, ask "Who should I be talking with in other companies about what we can do in T&D?" When you follow up on those leads, be sure to use the referrer's name. It is the biggest door opener there is, second only to your university name drop.

#3: Get out of the office: If one of your hats is selling on-sites, how many hours per week are you off-campus doing that? 2, 10, 15? And if you don't have specific appointments, fill the gaps by joining two or three associations. Go to most of the meetings and network. Also, invite them to hold their meetings on-campus if you can. Offer to assist with program speakers or be a speaker yourself. And by joining, you will have your best list of all – the directory of members.

#4: Find the approving managers: Ask the question on evaluations and registrations – "Who, if not you, approved your enrollment is this program?" Also, review your open enrollment program history for the multiple enrollments by company. Ferret out the decision maker and thank him or her. Better yet, deliver a school coffee mug with your phone and email on it. Be sure they know that whatever they need, you can do. And to contact YOU, not just hit your website.

#5: Keep business hours: When you are closed or not in, what image does your voice mail or email auto-reply convey? If you are closed 2 weeks at Christmas, are you out of business? Would you work with a supplier you could not reach for 2 weeks? Find ways to consistently offer fast service and solutions, not barriers to doing business.

In addition to these 5 proactive measures, you may find that these next two ideas will give you a leg up on the competition:

#6: Spy on the competition: Be creative. I called the competition cold. I was able to get one of my advisory board members to approve my use of his name

and company. So I made the call to the competitor:
(Phone is answered)
"Hi, I would like to speak with someone about your in-company programs."
(Call is transferred)
"Hi, my name is Phil and I cam calling for Paul Duval, VP of HR at Accutech. We are considering having a Project Management program conducted for some of our employees. Can you do that and what would it cost?"

Occasionally the person I needed to speak with was not there at the time, so you have to decide how to handle that. But if and once you speak with the right person, you ask the above question and then just wait to see what they ask. Never volunteer information beyond that which answers the question.

#7: Ask the right questions when you receive a call:
If contract training sales is not your primary job or interest, having a process to follow will help immensely. And the first step most often is how you handle the inquiry when it first comes in, most often by phone. Having at least two people in your office who can handle these with some degree of confidence is a major plus. So, consider using these questions for your script and do some role playing in your office.

(Call comes in to your office)
"Hi, my name is Ann Jenkins, VP of HR at SysTel. We are considering having a Project Management program conducted for some of our IT people. Can you do that and what would it cost?"

(Consider asking the caller these questions:)

"Sure, we can do what you want. May I ask you a few questions now?"

- Have you identified your attendees yet – about how many?
- What is your time frame?
- Are there any particular content or outcomes that are a top priority?
- Where would you like to conduct the program – your location, our campus, other?
- Any budget considerations we should know about in order to make this happen?
- What do you need from us in order to make the decision?
- Who will be making the final decision?
- What prompted you to call and ask us about conducting this program?
- What didn't I ask that I should have asked?

The above are the top 7 and as surprising as it may seem (coming from me) not one of them relates to renting a mailing list to generate good leads. Yes, there are other ways to generate leads, quite often dependent on your niche and market area – local, regional, national or global.

If you want to explore with specific schools what they do, there is no better place than our upcoming **ProEd Conference on Management, Executive and Professional Development Programs,** November 19-22, 2010 in Orlando. Don't miss this treasure trove of information.

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