

## In Search Of The Holy Grail

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An executive director of a chamber of commerce recently told me that of all the seminars she puts on, the seminars on business development and increasing sales are the most highly attended. Not surprising, given the struggles most businesses experienced during the Great Recession.

Owners are also finding it more difficult to bring in more business than they did in the past. During the good times of yesteryear, businesses didn't have to work real hard at bringing in new customers or increase sales to existing customers. They came in as part of what was then, the ever-rising high tide of increased wealth and overspending.

Today, it is a totally different economy and market place. It not only takes a lot of work to just retain existing customers, but even more work to bring in new ones. The result, businesses are searching for answers and looking for assistance everywhere they can.

There are a lot of solid, proven strategies and tactics readily available to draw upon; including increased revenues through acquisitions, expansion into new territories or new product lines - whether it comes from the efforts of effective branding, use of social media or other marketing means.

But buried among all of this material, there is one underlying concept that eludes a lot of businesses because of its simplicity; customers are the true cornerstone to all sales efforts. As the late business guru Peter Drucker advised, "Customers are the business". For me, the search for increased sales should start and end right there.

Think about it. What good does it do bringing in new customers with a great branding campaign if you lose your existing customers? If you expand or acquire new customers, how will you retain them? It all comes down to the value they receive and how they are treated.

No long search is necessary. You can start increasing sales immediately by making your customers feel important and showing them that you care about them. Remember that business is personal; it is all about people and the personal touch. Make them feel that they are important.

As the world grows bigger every day, our desire to feel important has grown into a need. The customer who feels important feels loyal and will end up being your biggest marketing advocate and will help drive your sales efforts.

Your search for increased sales begins and ends right here with your customers. The answer was always right in front of you.