

New Business

One of the least understood secrets of successful marketing is the ease with which new business may be won. As powerful as you may be with that knowledge, your power increases when you comprehend the importance of gaining that new business in the first place.

Although it now costs you six times more to sell something to a new customer than to an existing customer -- which is why guerrillas market so caringly and consistently to their customers -- there is a constant need to increase your customer base. Therefore, you're got to be willing to turn cartwheels in order to get a human being converted into a real live paying customer. Break even or even lose money in the quest for a new customer because your investment in securing these precious souls will be returned manyfold.

Once your prospects become customers, they're a source of profits for life -- because guerrillas know the crucial importance of non-stop follow-up. The follow-up increases your profits while decreasing your cost or marketing. Remember, it's only one-sixth the cost of marketing to non-customers. But let's get back to those non-customers and consider a potent guerrilla tactic to win their business and transfer them from the twilight zone to your customer list, where they belong.

The tactic begins with a phrase: A powerful guerrilla phrase to emblazon amidst your memory cells is "pilot project." It is often difficult to get a company or a person to agree to do business with you. It is much simpler to get them to agree to a mere pilot project. Even if companies or individuals are unhappy with their current suppliers, they may be reluctant to sever the relationship and sign up with you -- just in case you turn out to be flaky. But you defuse that reluctance when you assure them that you don't want to get married -- and get all their business. You only want to become engaged --- and get a simple pilot project. That's certainly not asking for much.

Pilot projects are very tempting to companies and to individuals because they allow these good people to see if you're as good as you say you are, without going too far out on a limb. Even if the project is a bust, it was only a pilot project. No big deal. But if the project is a success -- well then, that certainly indicates that a larger project should be undertaken, then a larger one still, and eventually, all the business. Moral? It's tough to get an okay for all the new business. It is far less tough to get an okay for a pilot project.

The concept of aiming for pilot projects may be applied as easily to a service business as a product business. If you perform services, offer to perform them for only part of the customer's needs, not all of them. Offer to perform them for a test period only, something like six weeks or so. Maybe even less if you feel that less time will be enough for you to prove your worth and value. If you sell products, ask the storeowner you're speaking to that during the pilot project, they be given prominent display, proper signage, and ample shelf space. But because it's only a pilot project, ask for this only for a limited time, or with a limited order. Will your product's produce profits? This simple pilot project will tell.

Guerrillas are wary of wooing new business by offering discounts -- because they know darned well that customers who purchase by price alone are the worst possible kind, disloyal, expensive to maintain, and in the end, only one-ninth as profitable as loyal customers who stick around because of value or service, quality or selection. But these same guerrillas are very willing even to lose money on customers -- for the first sale only -- if the customers focus on things other than mere cost.

Pilot projects are rarely profit producers all by themselves. But they open the door to a world where profits abound, a world where relationships are lasting. That's why savvy companies and individuals say "yes" to offers of pilot projects. These projects are inexpensive learning and high potential earning opportunities. Hey! Why not do a pilot project on pilot projects?

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