

Make the Most of your Networking Efforts...

Use Handwritten Notes in your Follow-up Strategies

by Vanessa Lowry

How are your networking efforts working for you?

Keith Ferrazzi says that FOLLOW-UP will set you above 95% of your peers. And a handwritten note that gets opened and makes a lasting impression will help your follow-up effort become even more effective.

I speak to hundreds of business professionals every year. I have them visualize looking through their mail and imagine a handwritten note in the pile. **All of them, 100%, agree that a handwritten note would be the mail they would open and remember.** Handwritten notes also raise the perception of your level of professionalism and customer service.

It is exciting to see how many handwritten note card advocates there are out there. I occasionally do a Google search to see what new things pop up and two different blog entries recently tooted the horn of handwritten notes. Thom Singer's blog entry was titled "**Handwritten Notes are Cool**" and he says, "*doing something 'cool' and 'memorable' is not about doing the same thing as everyone else.*"

A blog article by Tim Wackel says, "*But this is where the simple brilliance lies. Here is a communication vehicle that doesn't cost much, it grabs the attention of the recipient and is incredibly underutilized. People who send personal notes are thought to be considerate, creative, gracious, well mannered, mindful and a 'cut above the rest.' Not a bad return on stationery, a stamp and five minutes of writing!*" Tim goes on to say, "*Sending a handwritten note is one of the simplest and most underutilized tools in today's nutty busy crazy world. Every sales professional claims that they want to be different than everyone else, so here is a great opportunity to do just that. Find some time to slow down, take a deep breath, pick up pen and paper and watch the magic begin.*"

Taking the time to create a personal connection and make your recipient feel special is the way to extend relationships so you get the most benefit — both from a professional and a personal standpoint.

Everyone prefers to buy from someone they know, like and trust and will refer that trusted person to people that trust them. Building personal relationships will keep you from competing to have the lowest price. Your clients would rather be confident they are getting good value with someone who has their best interest in mind.

Remember one contact can have far-reaching results.

Here is a story of the extended reach of one connection.

My business started as a graphic design studio over 14 years ago. The first year I began working with the marketing department of a children's hospital. They hired me to design a quarterly newsletter and Ruth was a staff member outside of marketing that I worked with to complete that project every few months.

Ruth's son-in-law decided to start a business a few years later and I was referred to Zach to create the logo and marketing materials for his company. I worked with them for several years until Zach decided to make a change and went back to seminary.

He then went to work with a ministry of a large Atlanta area church and called me to create a brochure for that ministry.

This led to referrals to other ministries within the church and has allowed me to work on more than seven major projects of those ministries within the last five years.

In addition, Ruth left to work for another organization in the healthcare arena and I created trade show graphics, posters and brochures with her at the new organization.

Two years ago, Profits in Progress held an event to say "Thank You" to volunteers who had helped with Hurricane Katrina efforts. Both Ruth and a contact I met through Zach supplied us with names of individuals to whom we sent handwritten thank you notes.

Far reaching results from staying in touch and following up.

There are many methods for following up with your contacts and customers. **Take advantage of a variety of touches so it stays fresh.** As Renee Walkup of Sales Peak said in her recent newsletter, "*Stay in touch using varying methods. Examples include: the telephone, email, snail mail, faxes, trade shows, social events, newsletters, articles, white papers, and personalization. Get creative and most of all, mix it up!*"

Keep in mind that handwritten notes in the mix will give you a huge bang for your buck and time, making you stand out and be remembered. Get the most out of your networking... and your follow-up!

Find out more about the companies referenced in this article...

Keith Ferrazzi, www.ferrazzigreenlight.com

Thom Singer, www.thomsinger.com, blog at www.thomsinger.blogspot.com

Networking Quotient Quiz, www.networkingquotient.com

Tim Wackel, www.timwackel.com, blog at www.eyesonsales.com

Renee Walkup, www.salespeak.com

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