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Would you buy from anonymous@....?

A short while back we were undertaking some sales development work for a client and as part of the assignment we undertook to build them a specific target list of MDs and business owners in the services sector; generally small to medium sized businesses whose sole USP tends to be their service quality and customer relationships!

As the results came back from our initial trawl, I was astounded to see the number of small service businesses adopting a 'no names' policy! Now if you are the MD of a large pharmaceutical company with links to organisations who do animal testing, I can readily understand why your company might be reticent about handing out the MD's name and telephone number - but a services business?

Intrigued by this phenomenon, we dug a bit deeper. Not only did 30% of businesses not want to give out names on the telephone, but also not once did the young lady (usually) on the other end of the line ask if we were either an existing customer or a prospective new one. So here was a service or sales opportunity lost, not to mention the possibility that we were a disgruntled client with a problem to resolve – or it seems in a large number of companies, not resolve.

We then had a look at a sample of the companies' web sites; not one web site from this group had any personal contact details on at all – we might as well have been trying to contact marsians for all the human presence available. The contact details supplied ranged from the usual anonymous 'info@', to 'sales@', 'enquiries@' which we see frequently, to perhaps the least appealing generic we have

Quote of the month

"There is no such thing as failure, only failure to try again"

Unattributed

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ever seen – ‘accounts@’! I understand that people are concerned about spam or unwanted calls from over eager sales people but these can be easily prevented. Personally I like calls from sales people, particularly the good ones as they provide valuable learning experiences.

This leads me back to one of the principal lessons I learned early in my sales career. ‘People buy from people’. OK, I know e-commerce is a big deal these days and we should all exploit the power of the web to ease our sales processes. But if you are truly proud of whom you are, what you do, and the customers you serve surely you should at least put your names out there on the web site? The best practice sites put photos of the owners, directors, or principal managers too. The only differentiator many service businesses have is the quality of their service and the personal knowledge and contact with their customers – so flaunt it! Make yourself known! Would you buy a business critical service from someone who wouldn’t give out their name? Neither would we.

Good selling

Chris Howells
Managing Director

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