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Before You Begin –

My very best friend of over 40 years (yes, I'm that old) likes to say, "To get what you've never had, you must be willing to do what you've never done." Master of the obvious, yet most people never really GET this.

I'm sure you've heard of the definition of insanity, however, in the small chance you haven't, it goes like this, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing and expecting different results."

You have made a step in the right direction by downloading this information and we think you won't be disappointed.

So get ready to learn – and do something different.

The bottom line, if you'll pardon the pun, is that, "Nothing happens until somebody sells something." This bit of wisdom has been with me since my teenage years – sometime between the invention of television and the microwave oven.

The fact is EVERYTHING is sold. Yes, everything. Are you married? A sale was made. Does someone pay you money for your services? A sale was made. Even when (if) you go to church – the service consists of a greeting, setting the stage, making a presentation (the sermon) and asking for the order – let me see those hands raised.

Sales = Presentation – in many ways...right? How's your presentation stacking up?

Everything is sold. So, the bottom line is the ultimate Key Performance Indicator for your marketing efforts. If what you are doing (or going to do), doesn't translate to increased sales, you are wasting your time and money.

Now that you are armed with an understanding of these two adages, you can better understand how to look at and benefit from the information that follows.

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1 Round Up Your Marketing...

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Round Up Your Marketing –

This very important first step is somewhat like herding cats. Of course, that depends on the size of your organization and how long you've been in existence. If you are a small company you most likely are doing little or no marketing so this step isn't a big deal. If you are a larger company, say $500K to $10M in annual revenue, you know what we're talking about.

Either way, you must round it all up so you can look at it. Here's a list of places your marketing is likely hiding:

- Website
- Social Media
- White Papers/eBooks/Blogs/Newsletters, etc.
- Networking Groups
- Customer Database
- Print Publications (magazine ads, newspaper, direct mail)
- Sponsorships – including golf tournaments
- Events – including educational seminars, lunch 'n learns,
- Exhibits, public speaking
- Community Involvement
- Political, non-profit, and social organizations

Once you have identified all your marketing sources, you are ready for the next step.

2 Look for Measurement and Performance...

Look For Measurement & Performance –

You cannot improve what you cannot measure! Some of your marketing efforts are easily measureable, others are not. For example, digital marketing is 100% track able – but to be effective, build in the metrics you want to measure. Newspaper and magazine articles are more difficult to measure but can return good information that will help you determine ROI. Again, the secret is to build in unique calls to action and contact information so you can measure performance.

You must measure each of the areas you uncovered in your "marketing roundup". You may be surprised to find that, though measureable, your efforts weren't set up right. Or worse – they are but you haven't looked at them in so long that you've been throwing money at the wrong thing. Either scenario is costing you money and giving you a minimal or no return.

Here are some things you should look for:

- How much does this (marketing effort) cost – in dollars?
- How much does this cost you in labor (yours, your employees)?
- What is the measurement for this activity?
- Is it the right measurement?
- How can you measure this to get better information?
- What is the ROI? –
- Is the ROI worth the effort?
- What is the frequency of this activity? (daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually)

Now that you've examined your marketing efforts, you should be able to see what needs to go and what you should keep. So make some decisions here. But remember – never say never. What we mean by this is that the marketing efforts you cut today because of lack of performance may be just what you need as your company grows. So table these for reexamination at a future time.

This activity will help you move your money around and guide you when you set your marketing budget (more on this shortly).

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3 Benchmark Your Position

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Benchmark Your Position –

This all-important step is necessary to determine the degree of effectiveness of your future efforts. How can you know what's working (and how fast) if you don't set a starting point. You must do this for each of the marketing areas you have identified in step one. You will also want to note your starting point for each new (not previously employed) effort.

Beginning with your website, the sample below shows what you are looking for:

- How much business comes to our company through our website?
    - o If this is a significant amount, you will want to benchmark each sales-entry point. These include pages visited before contact, calls to action that were responded to, contact forms completed, and phone calls made.

If you get little or no business from your website, you are in good company. The majority of company websites are not designed for contact. And they should be!

Is your website clearly understood, or confusing?

Is your content compelling or boring?

Can site visitors get what they are looking for in 3 clicks or three minutes?

If you get little or no business from your website, benchmarking is easy, you're starting with nothing, fixing this will make you look like a superstar.

By the way, if your website is not the center of your marketing efforts, it should be.

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4 Focus on Depth Not Breadth

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Focus on Depth Not Breadth –

This step is driven by the size of your company. If you are a large company with a commensurate budget, you can afford to market through virtually all disciplines and with a reasonable amount of depth (impressions). However, if you are a midsize to smaller company (it's better to be a big fish in a little pond, than be a little fish in a vast ocean –of competition) and your budget is small (even non-existent) your very survival depends on the effectiveness of your marketing. Your focus should be on what will bring in the business, NOW. You can't afford to do everything. But you can afford (money and/or time) to do one or two. These will become your base for obtaining new leads, and opportunities to do business.

Under the assumption your marketing budget is low, you need to get the most bang for the buck. Marketing and ad agency people often suggest that you do a little here and there. This may sound like a good strategy but for small to mid-size organizations you are better off doing "more with less". You need to do a LOT in fewer areas. This will give you the momentum of multiple impressions for your target audience.

One way to get depth for little or no expense is personal networking. Whether you are a one-man show or a CEO with sales and admin support, personal networking is very effective...and fun. There are many forms of networking groups in your community and you should be in at least one of them:

- Networking Groups
- Rotary Club
- Chamber of Commerce
- Golf Leagues
- Church
- Other non-profits
- Community Events

Remember that we sell by relationship. When people need goods and services, they look to those they know. Nothing tells you more about a person than 4 hours on the golf course. Golf is a great way to watch how a person handles success, failure, their competitiveness, their vocabulary and their overall character. A word of caution though, your potential or current client is learning about you too. Realize, no one will have your level of enthusiasm or sincerity for your business than you. So get your biggest and most important ASSet out of your office and meet new people who don't know you, your story or your product.

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Another important area that is often overlooked is your customer base. People became your customers because you filled a need. The majority of your customer base sees you and your business favorably. What are you doing to keep your name in front of them? Your attitude should be that every customer is a customer for life (there are exceptions). They will buy from you again and they are a great source of referrals (referrals are not dependent on your advertising dollars and are quicker and easier to close). A word to the wise here...don't think sell, think serve. People don't like to be "sold" anything – but they love to be served. It's the Big Deal business philosophy in a nut shell. One creates opportunity for the other. So... serve to sell, and sell to serve.

If you're not selling enough, your not servicing enough.

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5 Know Your Customer

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Know Your Customer –

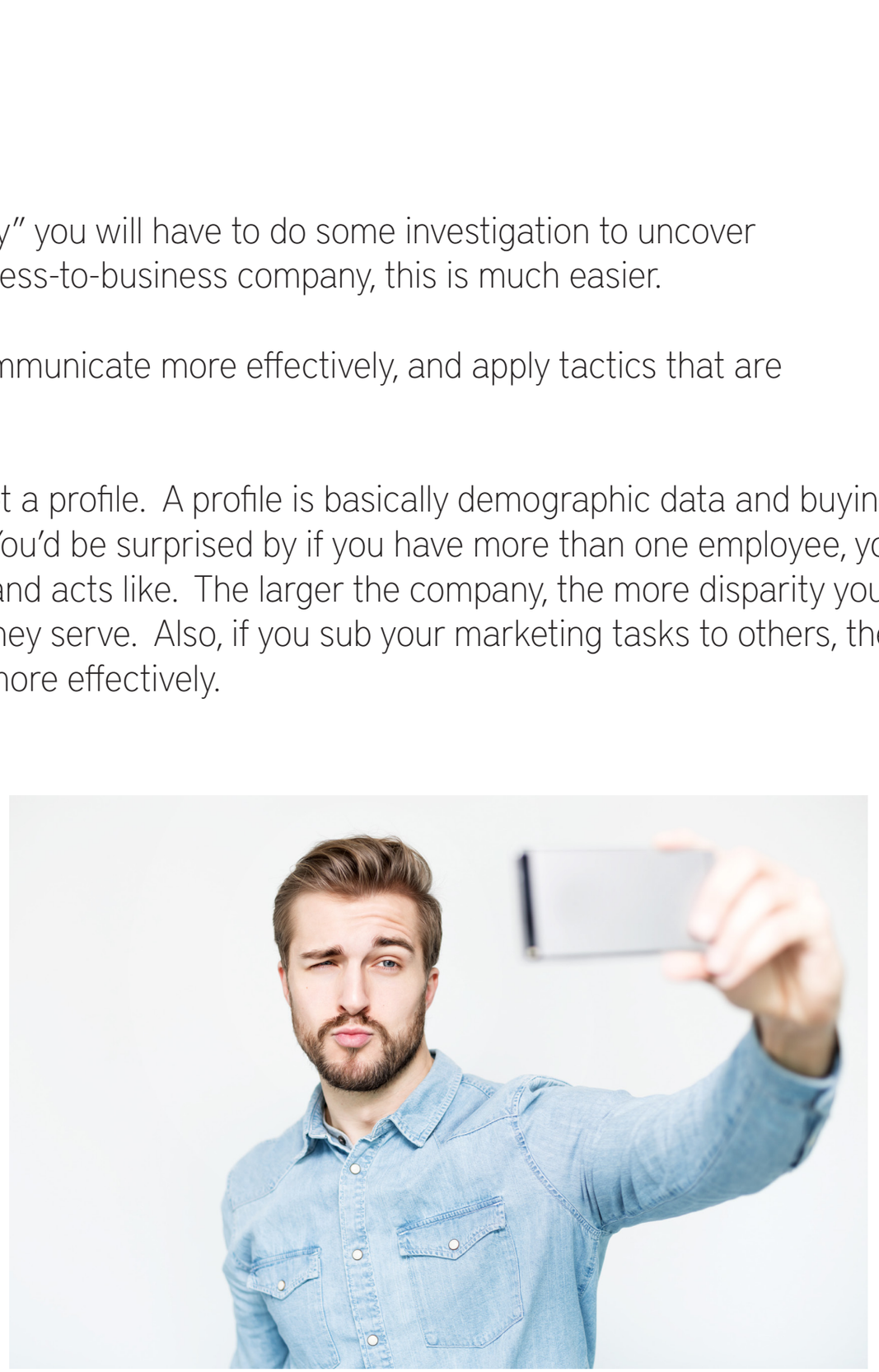
This is sometimes difficult. If you serve virtually "all or any" you will have to do some investigation to uncover commonalities that you can market to. If you are a business-to-business company, this is much easier.

Knowing your customer can help you target markets, communicate more effectively, and apply tactics that are compelling – and get results.

How do you define your customer? Create a persona, not a profile. A profile is basically demographic data and buying trends. A persona is much more because it's personal. You'd be surprised by if you have more than one employee, you will have a different opinion on what this "person" looks and acts like. The larger the company, the more disparity you will have. Everyone in your company should know who they serve. Also, if you sub your marketing tasks to others, they need to know your customer so they can communicate more effectively.

Here are some things to consider as you get started:

- Male/Female or both?
- Married/Single or both?
- Children? How many?
- Age(s)
- Educational level
- Vehicle(s) owned (and how long)
- Income(s)
- Vocation/Profession
- Recreational habits
- Other social habits/interactions
- Community Involvement
- Church affiliation or none?
- Social Media usage



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Your goal is to make your customer as real to you and your people as possible. You want to imagine what they look like and even what their names might be.

We created 3 personas for a company because they had three distinct categories of clientele. One of the commonalities was that in all three groups, the client was a married couple so we went after family information and determined their goals and priorities. This helped us to communicate more effectively to each target group.

There is no substitute for knowing your customer.

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6 Determine Your Budget

7 List Your Activities

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Determine Your Budget –

How much will your ideas cost? You cannot run a successful enterprise without a budget. Without budget parameters you will spend too little or too much. Do you really have money to waste? A good rule of thumb for most small to midsize businesses is 3-5% of gross revenue. If your annual revenue is $1M, $30-$50K should be allocated for marketing. That's $2500 to $4000 per month. These numbers are reasonable regardless of what you are selling for the most part. Once you determine your budget, you need to spend it. But spend it in the right place or places otherwise you might as well light hundred dollar bills on fire.

List Your Activities –

When a general contractor begins a project, he works with the architect to be sure they are in agreement regarding engineering, materials and finishes, and deadlines. By the time you get to this step you should be able to look at the plan you've devised and determine what your activities and timeline for implementation and measure ment are going to be.

The following is a list of things to consider when settling on your marketing activities:

- What will we do?
- How will we do it?
- How much does each method cost? (labor and money)
- Do these activities fit into the overall marketing budget?
- Do these activities follow best practices for my target audience?
- Who will perform these activities? (are they capable or should you sub out this work?)

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8 Set Goals & Timeline

Set Goals & Timeline –

Dream big. After dreaming, ask yourself this important question, "What am I going to differently do today, tomorrow and next week to achieve my dream? Dreams are the foundation of vision. But vision without action is smoke and mirrors. You must turn vision into mission. This is done by setting meaningful goals with steps and deadlines, and with ACTION!

This should go without saying but many people leave this out of the equation and that's a big NO. Your goals should have three levels. Think of your goals like pole vaulting. When you start, set the bar to a level you can reach relatively easily. Reaching this goal gives you some success and builds confidence in your plan. Your second possibility sets the bar at a difficult but attainable level. As you learn to apply your marketing activities consistently you will find that the first level was somewhat easy and the more difficult goal is within reach. This will cause you to fight to reach the second level. And you should fight for your company – if you want to keep it. When everyone knows what the goals are it is easier to work together to achieve them. The third level is in the realm of possibilities. It is the dream of what you will one day accomplish. You may look at this level as superfluous because "it's just a dream" at this point but I can tell you from personal experience that the dream is doable - but not without achieving incremental goals.

Organizations are created by VISION. Organizations grow by MISSION

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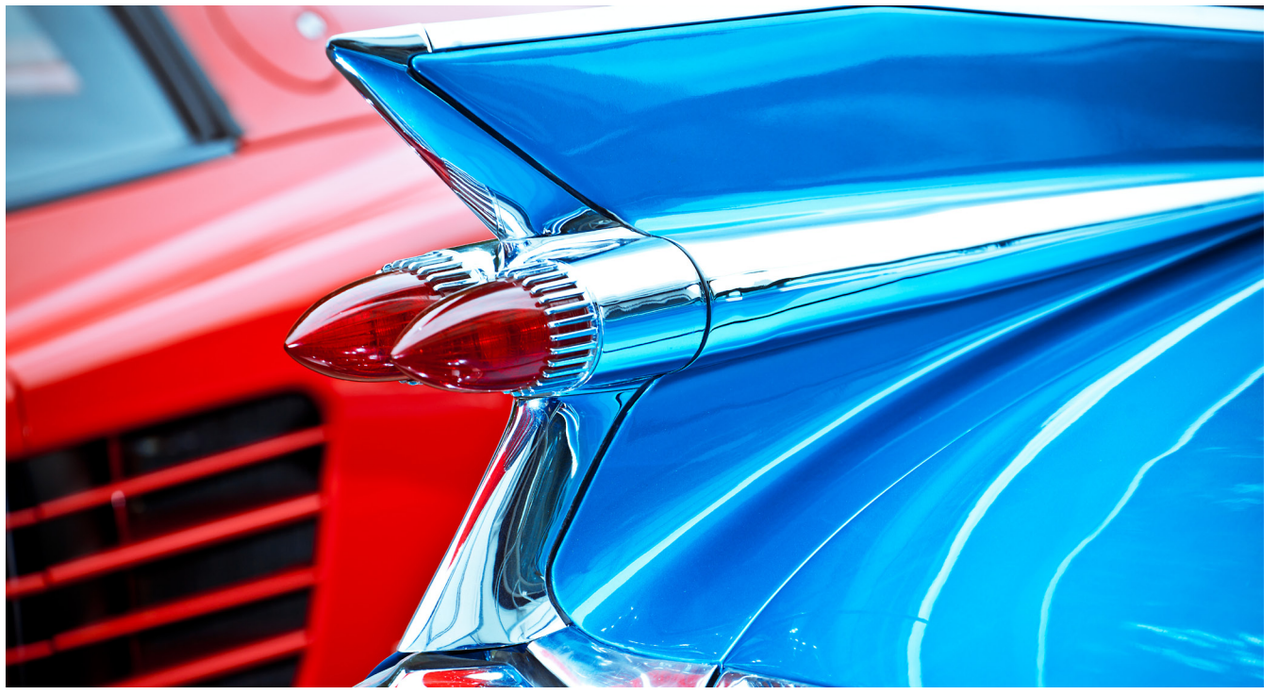
Years ago, I was hired as the assistant used car manager of a dual-point new car dealership. When I got there, I learned that their average month was 40 vehicles and their biggest year had a gross profit (after COGS) of $560K. When I left that dealership 6 years later, we were grossing over $2M annually and our average monthly sales volume when from 40 vehicles to nearly 200. Oh yes, and we doubled the sales force from 4 to 8. If you told me that we would achieve these numbers (ever) I would have told you that I think I'm good – but not that good. My first year there was spent selling off all the over-age vehicles and we still had a gross profit of $575K. The manager died 9 months after I was hired and I was promoted to the manager. Not the best way to be promoted but I wasn't going to turn it down. Each year we sold more vehicles and made more money. After the first two years, I started setting goals that stretched the possibilities, and I did a lot of dreaming. This is how we went from $560K to $2M annually.
But it was the early success that gave me the confidence to dream.



Dream big. But set reasonable goals to start.

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Do it...
Consistently

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Do It. Consistently –

The effects of exercise are minimal at best unless you do it consistently. Once or twice a week won't cut it if you want to get in shape and it's the same with goal achievement. Not only do you have to out-dream and out-goal your competition, you have to out-work them daily in the pursuit of your established goals. If you and your team swing for the stars every day you just might hit the moon...right?

What does consistency do for you? Consistency doesn't add results, it multiplies them exponentially. The greater your consistency in applying your goals over time, the greater the exponential result. If you are trying to break out of the one-man-band cycle, consistency of action is one of your greatest assets.

But be sure your actions are correct. Consistently doing the WRONG things will get you nowhere. Which leads us to the next all-important step:

Measure/Revise/Repeat.

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10

Measure
Results
Revise
Repeat

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Measure Results/Revise/Repeat –

If you don't build measurement into your goals you will never know what is working and how effective a particular activity is.

Set checkpoints of time to measure and analyze the effectiveness of your activities. Some activities measurement should be checked weekly while other activities will need longer periods of time for reasonably accurate feedback. Your goals should be reviewed monthly, quarterly and annually depending on the goal.

Short term goals include:

- Leads generated
- Interviews conducted (client meetings)
- Presentations made
- Closing ratio
- Reasons why you didn't close
- Delivery of product or service (how did it go?)
- Customer care (transition to customer account maintenance)

These should be measured monthly, while other goals require more time to develop reliable feedback. These include:

- Over-arching marketing campaigns (annual themes)
- Product launch campaigns (as part of the overall campaign)
- Social media posts
- Website analytics
- Newsletters
- Blogs

These should be measured quarterly. It's important to know how long it takes for a product launch to achieve financial viability. Do you have the finances set aside to go the distance for these longer-term activities? Should your posts, blogs, and newsletters be increased or decreased in frequency?

You cannot improve what you cannot measure. That said, each marketing activity or task should be measureable, over time. When the time comes to measure the results, what did we learn?

Revise your activities with lessons learned from the previous benchmark. How is it going? Did you achieve your goal? Revise it; up the ante. Did you fail to achieve the expected results? Revise, revise, revise.

Then repeat. Run the revised goal over time – a time to measure again.

Revise Repeat Grow

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11 In Summary

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In Summary –

To have what you've never had, you must be willing to do what you've never done. It's hard work and it takes faith – lots of faith. Why? Because change is hard - but the rewards are worth the effort.

- Round up your marketing activities; determine what to keep, what to cut, and what to add.
- Measure everything. If you can't measure it, forget it.
- Benchmark your current position (so you can measure your progress)
- Go deep before going wide.
- Know your customer
- Determine your budget
- List the activities necessary for your business to grow
- Set meaningful goals – but don't forget to dream big
- Be sure your goals are specific (steps) and have deadlines for measurement
- Do it. Now. Consistently.
- Measure/Revise/Repeat

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Most companies invest little time in developing an effective strategic marketing plan. Those that do, grow faster with more predictability and more profitability than those that don't.

Whether you live in a house, apartment or even a tent, there was a design (plan) that was properly executed. Your business is no different. You must develop and execute a viable plan if you want your business to stand and weather the storms that are sure to come your way.

Here's a time-worn expression, "If you don't know where you're going, you may never get there."

If you would like help developing an effective strategic marketing plan, give us a call. We're here to serve.

757-323-7400. ThePlan@BigDealMarketingGroup.com.

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One Last Thing –

Increasing your opportunities to do business is worthless if you don't engage in the process. YOU are the one who has to fight for your business. Don't make the mistake of hiring someone (like us) and think we are going to do all this for you without your total buy-in and commitment to your involvement in the process. It is our hope that, as you apply these steps cosistently, you will see your organization reach new highs.

Remember...nothing happens until somebody sells something!