

How to grow your business

by Gianni Anchois

Hint: it's all about your clients!

In the first chapter of my recently launched book ***“Leader\$hip, an insider guide”***, I advocate that the best approach to any business venture is to have a simple but comprehensive plan.

Start from the key fundamental pillars represented by your employees, your company purpose and the reference market you are targeting. Have clarity on why you do what you do. Explain how you are taking your products and services to market. Understand what motivates you and your team to go the extra mile to gain clients, market share, revenues, share of mind, fans and followers.

It all boils down to mastering the fundamentals: there are only three ways you can grow any business, and ideally you should aim at maximising each one.

1. Increase the number of your customers.

Adding customers is the hardest way to grow: its expensive, time consuming and difficult. The cost of acquiring a new customer is high, plus it takes a lot of time and effort to build trustful relationships with people and with companies. Until you do, they will not do business with you.

2. Increase the average transaction value.

If you can increase the amount of money clients spend with you for each purchase, you are going to get better resource efficiency on top of better economy of scale.

3. Increase your customer's frequency of purchase.

Clients that buy often are good customers. Perhaps they do it because they are delighted with your products, because you are selling perishable goods (services) that need frequent replenishment, or because they are themselves growing their business.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE CLIENT'S DECISIONS

You can achieve a much higher degree of success if you can shorten the time it takes your clients to decide on your product or service.

What if you could make them ridiculously easy to decide upon? Remove as much complexity as you can from the language you use to describe them. Relentlessly review your selling process and remove all the bottlenecks. Make it so straightforward that your clients will decide in half the time than usual.

Remember that the key question you need to answer is "Why should I buy from your company?". If you can be compelling enough in your answer, then you will have a much better chance to get a sale.

Beware though, because it's a tricky question. My recommendation is to refrain from the standard - and commonly accepted - answer: differentiation. Remember that clients do not buy a product or a service. They buy an outcome. A benefit. A tangible result. Sometime even the vision of a better future. So don't waste too much time differentiating your product versus the competition. Play a different game. Be original. Out-think your competitors. Focus on your clients, and what your product will do for them. Be specific. Understand what your customer needs and - as much as you can - push back on what he wants. Then, once the sale is completed, go and delight your client with your product, service and support. Then do it again, and again.

THE OUT-TO-IN MARKETING LENS

Seems a lot of work for a sale. And it is! However, you are not alone. Your marketing team will greatly help the sales push if together they can build a resounding, relevant and impactful selling proposition. Look at your products from the client perspective - what I call the “out-to-in” marketing lens. Depict a scenario in which the client business will grow, prosper and thrive because of your products. Build a story around it in a way that it will be easy for the client to learn, adopt and re-tell. Forget about marketing dogma of unique selling proposition. What is unique is the client and their business imperatives, anything else is just marketing fluff.

Speak a plain but effective language. Show your clients what you do for them rather than telling them. Never dwell too much on your company. The centre of any customer interaction and conversation should always be the client - not you.

OUT-EDUCATE YOUR COMPETITORS

It might seem counter intuitive, but focusing on the competition is the wrong approach. Who's your competitor anyway? Market dynamics, economic conditions and business models change very quickly, powered by technological advances and easier access to technology. Who would have said three years ago that a bookseller would be the leading cloud provider today (AWS)? Or that a college social media application would revolutionise the way we engage with friends and companies (Facebook)? Or that a California website selling second-hand goods would change e-commerce forever (e-bay)?

Keep in mind that the clients' purchasing cycle has also changed, and keeps evolving. Remember the fashionable B2B marketplace portals of a few years back? Or the reverse auction wonders?

INVEST YOUR TIME WHERE IT MATTERS THE MOST

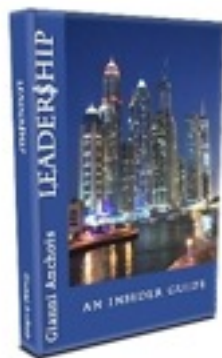
Be where your clients are. Don't waste your best efforts on stuff you cannot control. Focus on your clients, understand better than they do what their business needs are, educate them and deliver the goods. The more you understand your clients, the easier it will be for you to introduce new and relevant products, to retire the ones that are not meeting client's needs anymore, and to chart a roadmap that will proactively help your customers take on the challenges of the future.

Don't just be client-centric, be client-driven.

Not just any client though. Focus on those who are part of your chosen market, who are delighted with your company (notice that I'm not saying "your products" or "your services"), who are pushing the boundaries of their business model. Educate them, take on their challenge as it was yours, be open and straightforward. Develop an emotional empathy. Trust them and their decisions.

In return, I guarantee they will trust you.

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Gianni Anchois is a writer, blogger and technology enthusiast, with a background in electronics engineering, computer science and marketing. He has worked at Olivetti, Italia Online, Yahoo! and Hewlett-Packard, in places as far apart as Europe, Latin America and the Middle East. His experience spans across sales, marketing, IT services, business management, e-commerce.

His first book "**Leader\$hip, an insider guide**" is [available from Amazon](#).