

# 6 Communication Questions to Fire up your Business Development



Helping organizations  
communicate effectively

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*We have to get this done today. Quick, we need a decision. Hurry, they're waiting for a response from us.*

Who has time for communications planning when there are prospects to call, customer meetings to schedule, trade shows to organize, a web site to update, sales materials to distribute and so on, and so on?

Yet for owners of small and mid-size businesses, effective communications with prospects, customers and other business builders are the foundation of a successful enterprise. In order to establish productive business relationships your sales, marketing, advertising, public relations, social media and other communication strategies must be working optimally and in synchrony.

Answering six questions can help you and your team to step back and look at the big picture and align communication strategies to ensure they are all working together to build your business. When a comprehensive communications audit or plan is too ambitious for your company's time or resources, this simple communications check up can be of significant benefit.

Start by inviting a small group of three to six people for a brainstorming and planning session. To assemble this team, list all of the external groups that enable your business to succeed: prospects, clients/customers, referral sources, community influentials, business/trade groups, political connections, etc. Then determine which staff members have primary responsibility for communicating with these groups. If you're a sole proprietor, ask a couple of trusted colleagues who are familiar with your operation to participate. Include a facilitator – someone who can guide the discussion and objectively capture the group's thoughts.

Following are six key questions to address in your discussions.

## **Question 1: What are the primary communication challenges to reaching our business goals?**

What problems are you experiencing? With whom are you having these challenges? Where are they happening? When are they happening? How are they happening? Why are they happening? List and prioritize the results of this discussion.

## **Question 2: Who are the target groups we need to reach in order to address these challenges and succeed?**

If you must increase business referrals, for example, what sources are the most likely to produce those referrals? Do you need to reach certain elusive prospect groups to increase awareness of your company? Are lost customers impacting profitability?

Then, identify the main characteristics of these groups. Are the prospects you want to reach, for example, located in a particular geographic area? Do they share demographic characteristics such as age, interests, occupations? What about opinions, attitudes, interests, values or other psychographic attributes? Or do they share buying behaviours such as particular benefits they are seeking, or brand loyalty, etc.?

**Question 3: What do these groups know and think about our company?**

Are they aware of your company, your products/services? What are their attitudes? Do some have negative opinions? Specify what you know and don't know about the thoughts and opinions of these groups.

**Question 4: What do we want these groups to think and do about our company?**

Do you need them to become aware of your business? Do you need to change negative opinions? Reinforce positive attitudes? What attitude shifts need to happen for you to achieve your goals?

**Question 5: What do we need to communicate to these groups to encourage the opinions and actions we want?**

What messages do you need to communicate to influence the thinking and behaviour of each group? Why should they support your business?

**Question 6: How should we communicate with these audiences?**

What are the most practical and affordable ways to reach and influence each target group? What are the typical preferences of each group for acquiring information? Friends? Business colleagues? Google? Email? Radio? TV? Facebook? Newspapers? Twitter? Magazines? YouTube?

Now consider what you have learned from your discussions around each question and compare the ways these are different than the ways you are currently communicating. Look for gaps and opportunities. What adjustments should you make to your messages, communication tools and tactics? You may have to do some additional research before adjusting your communication activities but by now you should have a clearer understanding of what you need to do.

Only have time to make one quick decision right now? Then decide to do a communications check up – and make that commitment to fire up your business development.

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