



REPORT

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SEVEN Tactics for Finding New Customers

7 Tips in 7 Minutes

The Best Ways to Find New Customers

Identifying and attracting new customers can be one of the most difficult aspects of building your business, especially if you have a limited marketing budget. Aside from standing on the sidewalk with a sandwich board there are many ways you can gain visibility.



Network.

Get your name out to as many people as possible in your target market and communicate the value of your work.

- Check out your area for events that attract your ideal customer, ask questions about their business to find out how you can help them. If someone even shows a small bit of interest see if they would be willing to sit down with you and discuss their project needs.
- Ask if you can keep their information for the future and check in regularly as persistence often pays off in a big way. Think of it as relationship building - even if you don't walk away with a new customer, you've planted your idea in someone's mind and they may get in touch for future projects, or refer other friends or colleagues that require your scope of work.
- Get feedback from others. This can be a valuable learning experience to help you grow.

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Offer the best customer service.

Once you land a few clients, make sure to nurture those relationships in order to get referrals.

- Always deliver on time and exceed expectations, and be organized in your documentation, project management and communication.
- Have a firm hand with your clients and keep up with your values and business goals. There is a fine balance between being good to your clients and letting them walk all over you. Many clients, when given an inch, will take several miles.
- Identify opportunities to enhance value. Understand your business and care about their business to build trust. Some companies will “throw in” a small additional service in order to prove you are willing to go the extra mile, others will “bundle” services to save their client money.
- Once you have repeat clients be sure to ask for referrals and ask if you can share their success stories on your website. This builds trust for others to follow.

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Partner with a similar or complementary business.

Identify some successful companies that are in your wheelhouse that complement your own skills.

- As an example, if you are in graphic design, see if you can partner with a successful PR or marketing firm to complete a service package for your clients, and have them recommend your services to theirs.
- When approaching opportunities such as this, make sure to focus on what your business can do for them, as opposed to what can they do for you.
- Be prepared to add value to their company and up-sell the mutual benefits that could be reaped by both parties.

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Request for Proposals and Pre-qualification

Perfecting the art of bidding for RFPs can prove your worth in the marketplace.

- Repsonding to a Request for Proposal (RFP) can be risky since decision makers often have a particular vendor in mind. Sometimes, to encourage a fair process a 'blind' competition is held so that proposals are gradied on specific criteria. It's key to understand the grading system, which is generally provided, to better know where to focus and what your odds may be.
- It can be risky to take the time to craft an RFP since they are very time-consuming and difficult to win, so try to gain as much understanding of the organization, the project and the scope to make a determination based on your situation.
- Any time you are able to talk to decisions makers in person and ask tough questions you will be further ahead in making a decision to enter a bid and what you should include.
- A Pre-Qualification system is also common. At times, you will need to apply to be 'pre-qualified' to be receive an RFP, which will go out to a select group of vendors. Other times, this process is used to select a set of vendors that may be directly sourced for specific projects without a competition.
- Be sure to check if there are pre-qualification requirements for you to be invited to bid on a project, or better yet, gets you on a list of 'preferred vendors' that are contacted on an as-needed basis.
- Identify the areas in which you excel and showcase those skills and the results you have attained. The more you are aligned with the ideals of the RFP, the more likely you are to win the bid. If the project isn't a fit, then put your time elsewhere.

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Don't forget about SEO.

If you're a company that caters to a local crowd be sure that your potential customers can find you, don't rely on word of mouth alone.

- Make it easy for potential clients to find someone with your qualifications. Get a Google listing and be sure people can find you easily on local maps.
- Your competitors are doing it, so stop giving them an advantage and jump on the SEO bandwagon! It's a cost-effective way of marketing your business and an easy no brainer.
- SEO is even more important if you have a larger market. You want to stand out in a very large crowd, and finding some way to be unique is essential to finding new business.

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Content Marketing.

**What does your ideal customer like?
Find out and give it to them!**

- Find out where your market browses online and target ads specifically catering to these areas. Share valuable (and free!) content that will attract them to your site and allow them to trust you as an expert source.
- Test, test, and test again! Set up A/B testing (there are some great tools and resources on the web to get you started) and be sure to give them the time they need to gather enough intel to make an informed decision. Getting a large enough sample size over time is critical to finding out what works and what doesn't.

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Get involved locally.

It's not just good business, it's great exposure!

- Get involved with your community. Whether you host special events, participate in activities around your local area, or sponsor another event is a great way to show people who you are and what you do. And it's always a good feeling to give back in any capacity.
- Are you an entrepreneur with advice to share? Get involved with your local startup community. Do you support specific city initiatives? See if you can get a write-up in the newspaper or a spot on the news. Even if you don't have any specific things to share, give back to a charity with your staff - it will benefit everyone involved.