

Sales Xsellence

(An Xsell publication)

1,000,000 contacts in 1 month

***The Tipping Point* by Macolm Gladwell is a must read. The book describes how social behaviour tips as do trends like fashion, internet etc.**

I decided to run my own social experiment to find out if I could cause my own tip. As a daredevil at heart, I will try anything once and I thought it would be fun. So the question was what could I tip?

In the 1960's, Milgram, a psychologist conducted an experiment to establish how many "passes" a letter had to make to get to its destination. Milgram sent a chain letter to 160 people in Omaha with the intention of finding a stockbroker in Boston. The idea was to find out how many times the letter was passed on and if it would reach the stockbroker. Milgram sent the letter to people who had a different surname to the stockbroker and ensured there was no direct connection. Milgram found that on average, five to six passes were made before the letter reached the stockbroker; hence the term "*six degrees of separation*."

While this term is used loosely, I wondered if this finding could be used in business? Given the changes in the way we do business I thought it would be interesting to find out if the internet would decrease or increase the degrees of separation.

Over the years, I had received invites to the LinkedIn network (www.linkedin.com), and had accepted the invites but never really did anything with the network. I decided that my experiment should be run through LinkedIn. An email was sent to the 27 contacts in my contact list. The aim was to reach Malcolm Gladwell, author of *The Tipping Point*. The purpose of the exercise was not to infringe on the writer's time, it was purely to see if one could get to the source.

The email to 27 contacts was sent on a Friday afternoon, and by Monday, 149 responses had returned with emails received from Australia, England, America and Asia. If, in such a short period of time, I was able to mobilise so many people, what else could be possible?

One email to 27 contacts resulted in:

- Increasing my personal contacts to 278
- Within 2 degrees of separation put me in contact with 12,200
- Within 3 degrees of separation put me in contact with **1,054,000 in a month**

THATS A LOT OF PEOPLE!

Is every one of those contacts going to benefit me or vice versa? The answer is no; however, they may be able to assist me in another capacity if an opportunity presented itself.

Gladwell calls these one million people Connectors. These are the people who know people, they make it their business to collect people because they understand the importance of networking and referrals.

As we come closer to the end of the calendar year I often hear the excuse that sales targets cannot be met because of the festive season. The truth is that targets aren't met in this period because there aren't enough leads in the sales pipeline. It amazes me when I see sales people stop selling in November because Christmas is coming.

Therefore, a consideration coming into Christmas is to address the number of leads you currently have in your pipeline for the December - January period. How can you increase your leads and networks so that targets are met?

In reality a million people is a lot of people, could I share some of these people with you? Of course I can, that is what LinkedIn is all about, connecting people.

As a final note, it was found the Milgram fabricated the results of his experiment and there was evidence that he "knew" the results before the experiment commenced. So six degrees of separation still remains a myth.

I'm not sure if I connected with Gladwell. We did get close in that a publisher knew him and was going to forward my email. He has not to date responded. However, the real take away from this social experiment is that collecting people and contacts is not that difficult. So if you sent out 27 emails to your network, what kind of results could you gain? And of those, how many could go into your sales pipeline?

I'm setting you a personal challenge to increase your contacts through face to face networking (see our next event), cold calling, referrals, internet networking sites etc.

- Anna Zammit

The power of networking

Here at Xsell we are firm believers in the benefits of networking. As business people, networking is an important part of our everyday job, and network effectively can give you results you need.

Over 50 like-minded business people joined us on Wednesday 7th October 2009 at The Canton Lounge for a purely networking event and a few drinks.

All reports were positive, with many people making new contacts, and thoroughly enjoying themselves!

We hope to see you at the next event on 9th November – see <http://www.xsell.net.au/Public-Relations/Networking.aspx> for the details.



Carol Wallbank and Jeff Bailey meet over a glass of red.



Svetlana, Chailee, Sharon, Brendan and Francine made new contacts and discussed business.

Getting the best out of your business: Sales or Marketing?

It's a common (and costly) mistake to believe that all a business needs to thrive is a good marketing plan.

Or, that a sound sales strategy and expert sales team alone will deliver a business its optimum returns.

However, to get the *best possible results* for your business, you need both elements, working closely together.

Without effective marketing you wouldn't attract the prospects or leads you need to be engaging with; and without an effective sales strategy and selling techniques, your marketing communications would fail to deliver the results you need to prosper.

Marketing is everything that you do to reach, inform and persuade prospects. The most outstanding sales skills in the world will not get results if consumers are unaware of your offering, how it differs from your competitors' offerings, and how it may benefit them personally. Without at least some initial awareness and interest, potential customers will not be making enquiries.

The **sales** process is everything that you do to close the sale and get a signed agreement or contract following an enquiry. The most carefully planned and creatively executed marketing campaign will not achieve the best return without experienced and effective salespeople to turn the leads generated into real clients.

Both activities are essential to the success of your business. By strategically combining both efforts you will give your business the best chance of successful growth.

Marketing

Your marketing will consist of all the methods you use to reach and persuade potential clients that your brand/product/service is the right choice for them. It makes the prospect aware of your business and therefore more likely to considering a purchase. It can consist of advertising (in newspapers, magazines, on TV and radio, online, outdoor media), printing and distributing flyers or brochures, public relations (like sponsorship, guest appearances, articles in publications), events and direct mail, or a combination of any of these communications.

Sales

The sales process consists of anything you do that involves interpersonal interaction. It is often done by a one-on-one meeting, 'cold' calls or networking. It's anything that engages

you with the prospect on a personal level rather than at a distance, allowing a two-way communication that a skilful salesperson will use to their advantage.

Your marketing efforts begin the process required to move a potential client to the close of the sale. If marketing is done effectively you can begin to move that prospect from a 'cold' to a 'warm' lead. Of course, once the prospect becomes 'warm' (that is, aware of or open to your offering) it's much easier for the sales professional to close the sale.

The marketing / sales cycle

It takes multiple contacts using both sales and marketing to move the prospect from one level to the next. That is why it's important that you develop a process that combines both elements. This will enable you to reach prospects at all three levels: 'cold', 'warm', and 'hot'.

Integrating your marketing and sales

The following exercise is a good way to begin this process.

Divide your prospect lists and databases into categories of 'cold', 'warm' and 'hot' leads. Then identify a strategy on how to proceed with each individual group.

For example you could try the following methods of contact:

Cold Lead Strategy - Send out a direct mailing or offer a special promotion (like an introductory offer); ideally, this communication would be personalised.

Warm Lead Strategy - Try a follow-up call, send out a personalised sales letter, or schedule a special seminar or training session to get all of these leads together. Once you've moved your prospect to the 'warm' level you can begin closing the sale. This is easier to do if you can engage the prospect, by conducting a one-on-one call, making a presentation, or presenting a proposal, estimate, or contract.

Do it properly!

You may have a sales background but not have a clue where to start with your marketing, or vice versa. To be successful and to work effectively together, these elements of your business must be undertaken with expertise. If you don't have the skills or experience needed, you should consider partnering with someone who has those skills. You can do this by creating a business partnership, subcontracting, or hiring in that talent.

And, as this is an evolving process, make a commitment to constantly update your databases and monitor your sales and marketing activities, seeking customer feedback wherever possible.

Alchemy: A truly golden opportunity

Finding a technical expert who can also *sell* is a challenge faced by many businesses. Technical sales people represent companies by selling a range of industrial, technical, medical and pharmaceutical goods and services to industrial, commercial, retail, professional, health or other businesses.

Often the technicians are seen as the 'behind the scenes' product specialists (either in designing, producing or maintaining of products), and the sales representatives are the staff who take the product to market and sell it. The beauty of having a **technical sales representative** is the combination of understanding the mechanics and intricacies of the product and the ability to influence and persuade clients to buy it.

When Xsell's Rebecca Hill attended a breakfast networking function organised by AON's Derek Ford on 21st May 2009, it was with a view to meet like-minded professionals who wanted to grow their businesses. At this breakfast she met the Managing Director of Alchemy Trading Company, Trevor Bassett, who formed his privately owned Australian company in September 2003.

Trevor explained that Alchemy has over 20 years experience in supplying industrial minerals to a vast array of applications. Trevor has been responsible for marketing UOP's Adsorbent range of products in Australia for over 15 years and has represented Calgon Carbons range of Activated Carbons to the oil and gas industry since 2003.

In her discussions with Trevor, it was evident that Trevor was looking for opportunities to grow his business, and was seeking the assistance of a technical sales representative to help him increase revenue and open new markets. Trevor suspected that finding a sales person with the technical experience he required would not be easy, and said that he would discuss the candidate's recruitment with Rebecca when he had formulated the job description and role requirements.

In the meantime, Rebecca came across the resume of a candidate who had many years experience in sales, particularly in the chemical, mining and foundry industry. It transpired that this candidate was not a good match for the position he had applied for, but Rebecca saw potential in the prospect of employment with Alchemy. This prompted her to contact Trevor and ask how the job description was coming along, and also to learn more about his business. Rebecca mentioned the candidate and arranged for his resume to be presented by Anna Zammit, Xsell's Managing Director, later that week (at yet another networking breakfast).

In an industry where recruitment is predominantly about

numbers: placing candidates with clients, and then on to the next placement, Xsell strives to set itself apart from its competitors by providing a service that is rare. Xsell is about making smart recruitment decisions for both the client and the candidate. Xsell believes that it has a responsibility to the employer and potential employee in making sure that there is a skills fit as well a cultural fit. What happened next was quite extraordinary ...

Trevor reviewed the candidate's resume, and expressed his interest. He engaged Xsell to recruit, and they proceeded with interviewing the candidate and profiling his sales ability. In understanding the candidate's career history, short and long term goals, and identifying his passion for sales and ability to meet targets, Xsell was confident he could add value to Trevor's business. An interview was set up so that Trevor could meet the candidate himself.

After meeting with the candidate, Trevor asked him to put forward a business case outlining how he would contribute to increasing Alchemy's revenue and his approach for taking their product to new markets. The document produced by the candidate impressed Trevor, so he decided to offer him a business development position, which would see him setting up and running a new part of the business, researching new markets and products. The candidate has since accepted the position, and has this to say of his recruitment experience with Xsell: *"I owe them gratitude for their foresight and enthusiasm in looking outside of the box and bringing the business arrangement to a positive conclusion."*

What began as a conversation over eggs and toast developed into the successful meeting of an employer's recruitment needs with the provision of an outstanding technical sales representative. Not only did the candidate have the right skill set for the position, but he was also a good cultural fit for Alchemy - an excellent example of why recruitment should be undertaken by skilled and experienced professionals.

To find out more about Alchemy Trading Co, you can visit <http://www.alchemytrading.com.au>

For more information on Xsell's recruitment services, check out <http://www.xsell.net.au/Recruitment/Employers.aspx>