A few years back, I was running a successful consultancy business, regularly employed by some big corporates actively engaged in taking over failing rivals. Two important factors always stood out in these situations.

While the failed companies had many faults including poor direction, lack of investment, falling sales and a general bewilderment that they were in this predicament at all, one thing they all had were customers.

Okay, this customer base had taken a bit of a hammering, but there was still some loyalty and this we built on to attract new ones and bring back those that had switched.

The second common thread was that they had forgotten what they were really good at.

They'd forgotten how to ignite customers' enthusiasm and lost sight of what made them different and go getting. They now spent more time and money looking inwards, slashing budgets and engendering a blame culture throughout the organisation, to create mistrust and uncertainty within a loyal workforce. A significant decline in sales and confidence was the outcome.

I always started the turn-arounds by generating a renewed belief in their products injecting fresh thinking into their marketing. It gave them positives to work with. Very quickly, day on day increases in sales would lift everyone's spirits and get them looking outwards again. It created a buzz with customers, a word of mouth confirmation that the brand was back up and firing on all cylinders.

In tough times it's natural for companies to turn inwards but while you may not be in danger of a take over, you still need to look outwards.Remind your customers, prospects (and suspects) how good you are. This can't be boring, using rehashed marketing, it has to be fresh and creative to make yourself even more visible to those you wish to attract.

And never underestimate what your prospects now want. Potential customers are as anxious about the future as you and may see what you offer from a new perspective in light of their own circumstances. You still have to explain it in a way which is useful to them.

Show prospects examples of why you're so damn good. Video works 100X better than all the words you can use in getting your message across. Show them you can deliver what they want and why they'd be crazy not to work with you.

It will mean breaking out of the comfort zone of "we'll always have sales because we've always have referrals" but if your prospects are struggling, so will your referrals. Act now and gauge how customers and prospects are changing their buying behaviours. Don't let more pro-active rivals nip ahead of you!

Four or five on-going marketing channels need to be working in unison, pulling in sales from previously untried quarters – which means being more creative than in any time in your history. Build for now!

Certain tools, like your website, may need to be revamped fairly soon but it won't work if there isn't: sufficient investment in accompanying online promotion or an understanding of how your lead generation, website and branding need to work seamlessly together – dissonance causes friction and friction loses sales. Start marketing more creatively. Add that video, create direct one-to-one communication with clients via your website, anything that keeps you firmly on their radar.

Be prepared. Be persuasive. Make it happen.

For more information:

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