



5 Strategies for Creating Effective Follow Up

by Tracey Lawton, Online Business Development Strategist

For a solo professional having an up-to-date contact management database is one of the KEY administrative systems you have to have for your business. And, even more important, is having a system in place to create effective follow-up. Your business is built on following up leads and building relationships.

If you don't have a contact management system in place, you will not be able to follow-up effectively with prospects, you could lose clients, and you will not be able to build your business.

Your contact management system needn't be a 'bells and whistles' expensive database but it does need to be easy to use, easy to maintain, and easy for you to find your contact data. Once your contact management system is in place you need to ensure that you keep it up-to-date and are using it to follow up with prospects.

Spreadsheets are a great tool for keeping track of your contacts, but even they have their limitations, particularly if your database is starting to get very large - anything over 100 contacts really needs to be on a computerised, contact management database.

My very favourite contact management system is ACT! It really meets all of the criteria above in that it's: Easy to use; Easy to maintain; and Easy to find contacts.

And here's a **tip I have for you** - you don't necessarily need the latest version, especially if you're going to use it just for yourself. I bought my first version of ACT! (ACT! 6.0 2004) off Ebay for \$20. If you're going to buy software off Ebay check that it's being sold as 'brand new and unregistered'. This was a very small investment for me to make to see if I liked the system and once I knew it was ideal I had no hesitation in upgrading to the latest version.

Keeping your contact management database up-to-date can seem a bit daunting, particularly if you have a lot of contacts. Here are my top 5 strategies for creating effective follow-up and keeping your contact management system up-to-date.

1. Update as you go along! Whenever you speak with or email a contact take a few minutes afterwards to update your database with this information BEFORE moving on to the next task. For example, did your conversation end with you promising to contact them again in a months' time? If so, note this down and create a follow-up task there and then so you don't forget.

2. Touch base regularly. Each month go through your database and see who you haven't had any contact with over the last few months. Send them a 'just getting in touch with you' email, or call them.

3. Don't forget good old-fashioned snail mail! Even snail-mail has gone all hi-tech. A great follow-up tool, and one that I currently use, is Send Out Cards - it's really quick and simple to use. You can choose to send either a card or postcard, and it makes for a great 'stay-in-touch' service. And just as simple to use as email, only more personal! You can even upload your own handwriting font to personalize your cards even more.

4. Send a newsletter. Okay, it's not exactly personal one-on-one follow up, but it is keeping you in touch with your database. Very often your newsletter will generate a response from your reader, which means you will be able to turn this into a one-on-one communication with your contact!

5. Keep the process going! Make it a habit to update your database regularly. If you don't get the opportunity to update your database as you're going along (Tip #1) spend 20 minutes at the end of each day reflecting on what you've done during the day, who you've contacted, what the outcome was, and enter all of this information into your contact management system.

What are you doing to create effective follow-up in your business? Let me know over at the blog.

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