

Manna from Heaven

Increasing the likelihood of receiving a “gift from nowhere.”

I started my work week in January of 2004 as I had each year for several. Using an electronic industry database, I pulled prospects by Standard Industrial Classification code and size and called it my prospect list. With a huge cup of coffee and a bag of sunflower seeds next to me I proceeded to work my way through the list.

“Hi,” I would begin when the receptionist picked up the phone, a greeting I would follow by introducing myself and my company. “Can you direct me to the person in your company who is responsible for metal finishing?”

“Metal what?”

“Finishing.” “You know, surface finishing, metal plating?”

“Oh right, that’s so and so.”

Company after company, contact after contact, voicemail after voicemail, hang-up after rejection I methodically proceeded, gathering what information I could from whomever I ended up speaking with. For fun I kept a tally on my computer of how many phone calls I could make in an hour, a day, a week.

had learned a ton about my prospects, including what type of work they were outsourcing, which of my competitors was doing it, whether they were satisfied with their supplier and sometimes even how much they were being charged.

Then began the laborious task of meeting with the prospects, finding their pain and winning their work. By the middle of March, 2004 I had added a respectable amount of revenue to my business.

Then came the phone call from a contact I had met at an industry event a couple of years before who worked for a large Original Equipment Manufacturer I’ll call Company X. He said “Management made the decision that they want to shut down our plating department and outsource the work. I would like you to stop in and discuss whether your company can do it.”

Long story short, we assessed and quoted the project and won the work. A huge amount of work. So huge that this one project alone enabled my company to grow by 20% in one year.

So began my “Manna from the Skies” theory of revenue growth. One way that Dictionary.com

Virtually out of the blue, a contact calls and drops a huge opportunity smack dab in the middle of my lap. I could not help but ponder the irony.

With focus, concentration, discipline and determination I could usually attempt to contact about 400 prospects over the course of five days. By the end of the week I had my calendar full of appointments and sales calls for the next month and

defines “Manna” is “any sudden or unexpected help, advantage, or aid to success.” That fits perfectly my Company X experience. Virtually out of the blue, a contact calls and drops a huge opportunity smack dab in the middle of my lap.

I could not help but ponder the irony. Hours and days on the telephone trying to drum up business. Thousands of miles on my car’s odometer traveling to and from the manufacturing plants of my prospects. Sales tools, proposals, price negotiations, objections and rejections all piling up in my quest to get to a “yes” from a buyer. All of this and my company grew 20% because I happened to meet a guy at an industry event and at least make a good enough impression that he thought to call me first when he had a need for my service.

I went on to review the list of new customers that

MATTHEW KIRCHNER CEO, American Finishing Resources, LLC

mkirchner@afrnw.com



my company had added and I realized that over half of the new revenue had resulted from prospects finding me, not me finding them.

This revelation led me to ponder whether there was anything I could do to increase the likelihood that when manna fell from the skies it would fall on me. The answer was yes, and since that time I have placed an emphasis on working the parts of my marketing plan that put the odds in my favor that a prospect looking for me will find me.

In my experience, the best tools for getting the manna odds in my favor include maintenance of an attractive Web site that drives prospects to my business, staying involved in our industry and making as many contacts as possible, and regularly accepting invitations to speak to manufacturing groups.

Any opportunity to have an article written about your organization provides a matching opportunity for an unknown potential customer to find you. Oftentimes, manna falls when a friendly competitor receives a request for a service that her company doesn't provide, but she refers the lead to another finisher that does. Finally, satisfied current customers aware that their coatings supplier is interested in growth can be excellent sources for manna.

If more than 50% of growth can result from being in the right place at the right time why not find a way to be there? ■



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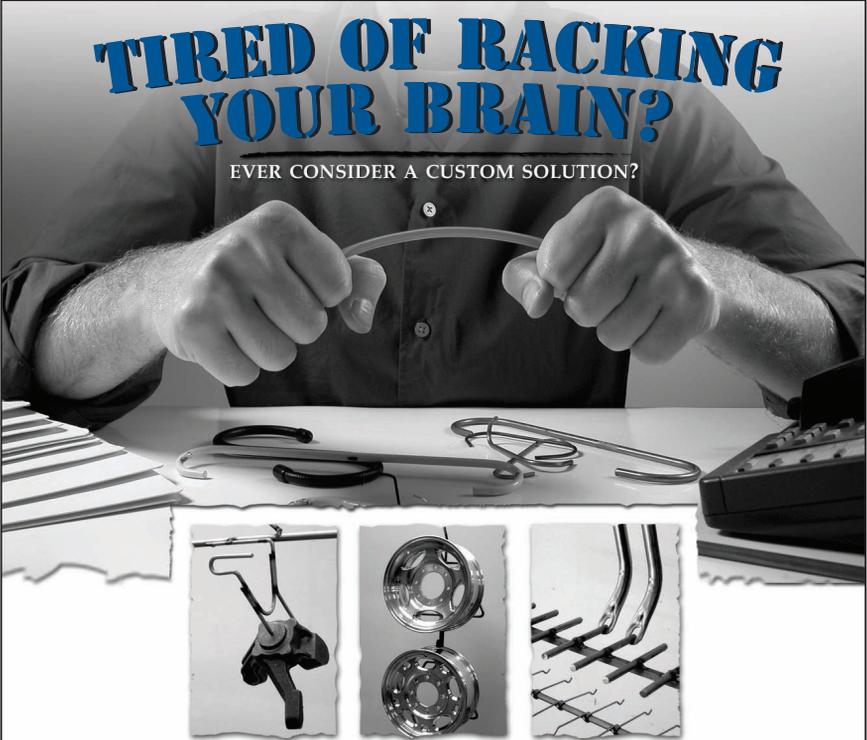
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