



E-book

Newsletter #5

Meeting Customers is Critical for Executives



Counting down my 10 most popular newsletters, here is #5.

A complete library of my newsletters can be found [here on my website](#).

Introduction

It happens gradually. Over time, no one really notices anymore. The CEO or President started the company – and did most of the selling for quite a while. As revenue increased, she hired salespeople whom she accompanied on their first few visits to customers in their territory. Then she hired a sales leader, responsible for training and ride-alongs with the reps. An inside sales group was added. She has no idea how they sound on the phone.

At this point, she hasn't seen or spoken to a customer – save for a very few she still has a relationship with – for years. She half-heartedly asks the reps to provide her with potential dates for her to accompany them. Not wanting additional supervision, the reps offer no dates. She doesn't push. The whole idea of going to see customers feels uncomfortable now. Everyone forgets about it.

Whether they founded the company or were hired later, company leaders must devote a percentage of their time to meeting with or speaking to (by phone or video conferencing) customers (small, medium and large).

Customers need and want to see you. It benefits everyone. Once you incorporate these visits into your schedule, it becomes part of culture. Your efforts in this area have a positive impact. Start scheduling these customer meetings consistently -- starting today.

Enjoy the eBook!

Suzanne



Newsletter

A client asks, "I'm the president of a small company. It's been suggested to me by peers and business advisors that I get out and meet my customers on a regular basis. I feel awkward at these meetings, worry that I'm wasting the customer's time, and don't see the value of it. Does it really do any good?"

It's critically important to the growth of any business that the person in charge not lose touch with the very people who help make their company a success. Making periodic customer visits is the very best way to do that. Why?

Peer to Peer

Company presidents like to meet other company presidents. It's as simple as that. No matter what the industry, executives share common issues and appreciate being able to talk to peers.

Show Appreciation

Taking the time to visit someone in their place of business shows them that they are a valued customer like no phone call or holiday card ever could. Nothing replaces being personally thanked for their business by the company president.

Share a Vision

Paying a visit allows you to talk about your company's plans for the future in a way a salesperson could not, and allows your customer to talk about their plans in a way they might not with the salesperson. Hearing about the customer's future plans enables you to think long-term about your business relationship with this particular company.

Take a Tour

I have never met a company president that did not enjoy giving a tour of their facility. It's usually very interesting and you will come away with a better understanding of how their organization really operates.



Networking

When two company presidents meet, they often think of several people they know that they think the other should contact. This usually doesn't happen, though, unless the two presidents are face to face. They may even offer to make an introduction to someone that you have always wanted to speak with but haven't felt comfortable contacting for one reason or another. Prior to the visit, you may want to think about who, in your network, they might like to meet.

Observe the Salesperson

How does your salesperson really interact with the customer? What do they actually say? What might they be neglecting to mention? Though company presidents often interact with their sales staff on a regular basis and may even manage them, they are often in the dark about how they conduct customer calls. Accompanying them is a great way to observe your sales staff first hand.

Proactive Beats Reactive

Some company presidents visit accounts only when the customer is extremely unhappy and may take their business elsewhere or to help close a large deal. Seeing accounts only in these two extremes makes executives hesitant about paying an ordinary visit. Use these visits to get to know your customer better so that when something does go wrong, or your assistance is needed in selling, you will be in a position to be even more helpful.

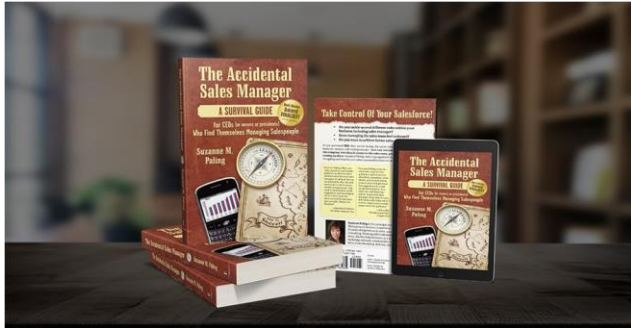
Get Energized

Most company presidents that I work with make the same comments after coming back from a client visit. They say they feel "relaxed," "re-energized" or "more focused." Many say they have a renewed appreciation for the jobs their salespeople do. They always, always learn something that they wouldn't have if they hadn't visited an account in person.

So get out there and visit those valued accounts. Start slowly. Make sure the first few visits are to accounts where you feel relatively secure. Once you're comfortable, schedule visits on a regular basis. You will be glad that you did.



Additional Resources



The Accidental Sales Manager

Chapter 9: Calling on the Largest Accounts

[MORE ABOUT THE BOOK >](#)

Further reading:

[Making Small Talk](#)

[Provide More to Your Largest Accounts](#)

[Site Visits - Making the Most of Them](#)

[Visualizing Changes in Your Top 20 Accounts](#)

[Managing Changes in Client Circumstances](#)

[Fostering Customer Contact](#)

[Communicating Price Increases to Customers](#)

[Review Accounts to Set Sales Priorities](#)

[Strengthening Relationships with Customers](#)