

Increase Your Business by Increasing Your Sphere of Influence

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How many people do you know? Probably more than you think. If you started to list your business associates, accountants, lawyers, insurance brokers, friends, relatives, your mail carrier, barber or hair dresser, your children's teachers, your veterinarian, next door neighbor, and everyone else you encounter on a day to day basis, with how many names would you come up?

One very successful businessman, Joe Girard, calculated that 250 was the average number for most people. Girard was one of the top car salespeople of all times, earning a place in the Guinness Book of World Records for selling more cars than anyone else in the world in one year.

His secret of success was no secret. Girard laid it out clearly in his book, *How to Sell Anything to Anybody*. The principle, which he called "Girard's Law of 250", was that every individual has what he called a "personal sphere of influence" of approximately 250 people. He pointed out that every one of those individuals also knows 250 people.

Therefore, once you get to know that person and he or she becomes part of your network, you're also gaining access to the 250 people in that person's network.

A simple truth about human nature is that people prefer to do business with someone they know and trust. Don't you regularly use the same accountant, the same auto shop, and the same dentist? That concept holds true for every aspect of business. The people who know and like you (those 250 people that make up your personal sphere of influence) form a network that represents your strongest base of potential customers.

All of the people in your network are potential customers. But once they've become satisfied customers, they're likely to pass along the word to the members of their sphere of influence. After all, when you need a new service, aren't you inclined to go with someone a friend or other associate recommends? That means the 250 people your satisfied customer knows will all become your potential customers.

Of course, there's no need to limit your sphere of influence to 250 people. We all meet new people every day—at work, at social events, while waiting in line at a store or even while riding the train to work. Carry a notebook so you can record names and contact information of new people who join your sphere of influence. You'll be amazed at how quickly it grows. You'll also be surprised at how many new business opportunities grow out of cultivating your existing (and ever growing!) referral group.

Providing the highest level of service possible is critical once you've started building a business relationship with members of your sphere of influence. Otherwise, you could lose their business, as well as the business of the other 250 members of their sphere of influence. And that means being consistent, which, after all, is the only way to build a strong reputation. One of the best illustrations of the importance of consistency is the restaurant business. You may enjoy eating at a particular restaurant for years. But if you have one bad experience—a

meal that doesn't agree with you, a rude waiter—how likely are you to go back? In addition, you're likely to tell your friends and business associates and everyone else in your sphere of influence, "Don't eat at XXX Restaurant anymore. It's really gone downhill!"

To build your business, you don't have to look very far. Given the 250 people in your sphere of influence and the 250 people in their sphere of influence, new business opportunities are all around you. Carry your notebook and make thinking about increasing your sphere of influence your number one priority. After all, it isn't just who you know or even what you know. The key to building your business is who likes and trusts you and knows what you can do for them.

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