

# **A New Blueprint For Selling To Employers**

*A No-Nonsense Guide for FE*

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## A New Blueprint For Selling To Employers

Selling can be a tough business and one that most people in FE would like to avoid.

Even with the help of national advertising, the brokerage service, cold-calling campaigns, branded literature, case studies and the like, doing business with employers can be an uphill task.

Yet, colleges and other providers know they need to build up their work with employers.

They also know that, for the future, the targets they are asked to reach are likely to be just as high. With straitened economic circumstances the marketing budget might be constrained. It might even shrink.

To succeed in difficult times FE needs a new blueprint for selling to employers. To succeed today FE needs to rethink its approach to selling to employers.

This is because:

- Modern approaches to sales and marketing are often more successful than the traditional and well-established approaches – so it makes sense to adopt them.
- Modern approaches to sales and marketing can be significantly cheaper than the more traditional approaches – so they are ideal in the current economic climate.

To help you to continue to expand your employer customer base and to do more business with existing employer customers there are **three areas** where reviewing and updating your approach to sales and marketing could make a big difference to your success.

Check them out on the pages which follow, and consider how, by using them, you could enhance your success with employers.

***A new blueprint for selling to employers – one: Make the most of your website.***

Think about the following:

- How up-to-date is your website?
- How attractive is your website to employers?
- Have you worked out exactly what you want your website to do for you?
- Have you worked out how your website supports your work with employers?

Every business needs a website these days and many people visit a business's website before they ever make contact with it. Most colleges and other providers have their sites. However, the site doesn't always help to build business.

In most cases the website is just an on-line brochure.

With FE that brochure is more likely to be geared towards learners, and potential learners, than it is to focus on employers. It is likely to be a medium through which courses are advertised and the organisation proclaims to the world what it does.

**This means that most of FE is missing out on the value that a well-constructed and well-presented website can generate in the employer marketplace.**

Modern websites need to work hard for their owners. As an absolute minimum they should:

- give a favourable impression of the organisation that sits behind it
- encourage visitors to the site to come back to the site again and again.

It's important to take action here to start to differentiate your organisation from others and to start to make your website "sticky". That is to ensure that employers like what they see and they come back again and again.

*And the benefits?*

Your reputation and credibility will be enhanced if you create a favourable impression via your website.

A website that is structured to be interesting to employers will tell employer visitors to your site that you take working with them seriously.

***A new blueprint for selling to employers - two: Make the most of your newsletter.***

One thing that is revolutionising sales and marketing is the falling cost of communicating with customers.

You can keep in touch with all your employer customers as often as you want to do so for very little outlay. You can segment your employer customer base into niches and communicate with each niche separately.

However, keeping in touch doesn't mean sending sales pitches to people every day via the internet. Your employers will not thank you for *that* type of communication.

You need to ensure that you send the type of communication that employers will welcome.

**The simplest way to do this is to start an e-newsletter.**

Supply employers with valuable information and useful hints, and they will look forward to receiving your communications.

A good e-zine or electronic newsletter can do a lot to:

- build awareness of you in your chosen marketplace
- bring in new business
- help you gain repeat business.

Of course, you need to get your employers' permission to send those newsletters and to accept that permission marketing may be a bit different from the sort of marketing you are used to.

It's worth doing because a well-respected e-zine or e-newsletter is a valuable sales tool.

*And the benefits?*

You will be building your list of organisations that are interested in you. This list will be far more valuable than any list you could buy.

You will be reminding employers, on a regular basis, that you are there and that you can be of assistance.

***A new blueprint for selling to employers - three: Make the most of “new” marketing.***

There's a lot that's new in sales and marketing these days and much of the innovation is well-suited to the educational world.

- Some of the innovation is built around new technology.
- Some of it is built on the concept of client attraction marketing. This means getting business to come to you, rather than you going out and trying to sell.

Putting the two together can help you to create a community of employers interested in doing business with you and keen to help you to grow and expand your provision.

There are numerous ways in which you can get started with “new” marketing.

Forward thinking organisations are using the new social networking tools to build communities of people who are interested in what they do. They use the new technology to build on-line forums. They use the networking opportunities that such communications generate very effectively.

They use their understanding of existing customers to help them to design more relevant training solutions. They involve their customers in the design of new training solutions.

**They put their energies into building relationships with employers and accept that the business will come in as a result of working collaboratively with their employer customers.**

The good news is: the strategy works. It's also good news that this model of building business is one that FE feels comfortable with.

*And the benefits?*

You can forget cold-calling, hard selling and promoting the sector's products to unenthusiastic organisations and still do lots more business with employers.

**Margaret Adams**

*Interested in learning more about the new blueprint for selling to employers? Then get in touch.*