What the NBA Playoffs Can Teach You About Client Acquisition

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I'm a huge sports fan, especially professional basketball. As a sports fan, I'm always fascinated with what makes one team successful versus everyone else. In the NBA, there are 30 teams competing each and every day, trying to do the exact thing that everyone else is … win a championship.

Literally hundreds of people throughout the organization are focused on one thing. Yet despite all of that, only one team achieves "success" each year. So, what allows them to have a dramatically different outcome than everyone else?

In my mind, adjustments are the key. Specifically, the adjustments the coaching staff makes during the games to give their team the best chance of winning. Things like:

- Who to play and who to sit based on game conditions
- Which plays to call (and to stop calling) during key situations
- When to slow down the tempo (or speed it up) based on your current game success

Championship-caliber coaches are constantly asking themselves, "What changes can I make now, based on the results I'm seeing?" They don't say, "I'm a smart guy, and I put a lot of time into this game plan coming in. So I'm just going to stick with it and hope for the best."

Yet, most business owners do the latter when it comes to client acquisition. They don’t adjust.

They think that what worked in the past is what’s going to work in the future, and they don’t take into account their present circumstances, which might be saying otherwise. So, what are some client acquisition adjustments that you as a business owner can make?

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Get clear on your buying market.

For those who might not be familiar with the term, your buying market simply refers to the group of people most likely to buy or contract your services.

This is where a lot of business owners get into trouble relating to client acquisition. They spend so much time trying to be everything to everyone, they don’t have a real clear idea of who their market is or why they buy.

Do yourself a favor: Look at your last six months of clients and see what they have in common. Are they all coming from a similar industry or part of the country? Are most of them women? Are most of them men? Are there any distinguishing features that you can discern just based on your own personal knowledge?

Then, assuming you find some commonalities, go back to your marketing efforts (e.g., website) and make sure you have language and concepts that really “speak” to this group.

This will make client acquisition so much easier, since you’ll be speaking more directly to those you’re looking to attract.

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Nail down your value proposition.

Why are people buying from you in the first place? Hint: It’s probably not your good looks and winning personality.

Instead, it’s something that you as a company bring to the table as it relates to solving a specific problem. For me, people have said that they enjoy the combination of the entertaining fashion in which I deliver information during a presentation, while also “chunking it down” and making it really easy to implement.

That’s what people say about me, so that is part of my value proposition when it comes to delivering presentations.

What is your value proposition? Why do people want to buy from you specifically?

If you don’t know, ask – current clients, past clients, your employees. See what they have to say, and then assuming you agree, make some adjustments in your marketing to better reflect what makes you stand out.

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Make your offer as clear and easy to understand as possible

This can be a hard one for business owners, since their offer is the clearest thing in the world – at least to themselves. But, for the person listening to it the first time, that might not necessarily be the case.

During your next sales meeting, be cognizant of how people are responding. Does it seem like prospects are understanding your point and what you offer, or do you find yourself explaining or sometimes even tripping up on various points?

I try to be as clear as possible with perspective coaching clients on what they'll get. When I close, I mention the name of the program, the number of sessions, how long each session lasts and the expected duration of the entire project. It's something I've really put time in rehearsing, and now comes out very naturally and concise.

The adjustment for you might be to practice that closing language so it comes across as being super easy to understand, which obviously makes it easier for people to buy.

The bottom line

Success in business, as in sports, is based on a number of things. But, one important factor is your ability to respond to outside conditions. For example, what are some things my competition is doing well? What are some things that I could be doing better? What adjustments can I make that will give my business the best chance of being successful?

If you're not already, start asking more of those types of questions. Because when you do, you'll find the results to be nothing short of championship-caliber.

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