

Hello everyone. Thank you for coming. My name is Michelle Pino and I am the Co-Owner of Northeast Unlimited Tours located in Bourne, MA. We are a receptive Tour Operator specializing in packaged travel throughout New England, New York, the Mid Atlantic region, and Eastern and Atlantic Canada.

I have been selling in the tourism industry for many years and feel I have developed a sales technique that works for me and is profitable for my company.

There are some of you here that have been in the business for years and have developed your own successful sales techniques and some of you who are new to the industry and exploring techniques that work and feel comfortable.

Wherever you are positioned in the industry, we all have a common goal – to generate business by turning sales leads into real dollars for our company.

Turning sales leads into real dollars

- **Can you show how you turn a lead into a sale?**

Act Fast - When you receive a lead, act fast! Be the first to call or email (depending on how they wish to be contacted) the potential customer. If you don't, your competition will!

I have had potential customers, now clients; say to me, "you are the first person that called me." Which shows them 1. You care 2. They are important 3. And creates an unspoken loyalty that you were the first one that called when they start receiving other calls.

Introduction – introduce yourself and your company, tells them where you received the lead from, briefly describe your company and succinctly outline how you can be of assistance to them and how they can benefit by working with you.

Listen – when talking with a potential customer, listen to them. Understand their needs and take notes. Whether it is for a tour package, hotel rooms, a group meal or banquet, a wedding, or a visit to an attraction, the key is, listen, so when you are creating their proposal, you include everything they mention. In addition, try to pick up on anything else that will help give you an edge. It's the small details that make a lasting impression. i.e.: perhaps in conversation they mention they've never been to Boston and wonder why it's called "bean town". This is your opportunity to mail them a small jar of Boston baked beans, along with a brief history and 'thank you for considering us' note. It goes along way!

Don't be afraid to ask questions - in order to provide the potential customer with exactly what they want, you need to ask questions. There is no question too silly. By asking them and understanding what they want and expect will only better serve you in providing them with the best product possible. As well, it helps you to know what you may be up against i.e.: competition.

Develop a relationship - In addition to the actual 'business' of turning a lead into a sale, it's important to create a rapport with the potential customer and begin to develop a relationship. A very important motto I live by is this, "People do business with people they like." So, aside from the actual mechanics of the process, relax and enjoy the process of getting to know your potential customer. We are all human and all have lives outside of work. Generate some kind of friendly dialog with them. Find out what makes them tick. And then remember to ask them about it in your next conversation.

Proposal – based on the information received, create a proposal that is clear, detailed, and includes all the information the client has asked for.

End result – hopefully, with your hard work and effort, you will turn your lead into a sale.

- **Where do you get your leads from?**

Leads come from many different sources throughout the tourism industry - Association memberships, chamber memberships, networking, referrals and Receptive Tour Operators.

Memberships/Conventions - Our Company draws its leads by attending annual conventions, such as:

- American Bus Association (ABA)
- Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA)
- International Motor Coach Group (IMG)
- Travel South
- Discover New England
- POW WOW

Chamber memberships - We also draw leads from our local Chambers who we are a member of. They are contacted by a Tour Operator and the Chamber representative passes it on to us, their members.

Networking – Networking events provide a valuable opportunity to talk with industry peers about your product. Your supplier partners are a strong ally, get to know each other. You become a stronger sell when you partner up and package together. Tour Operators want to know why they should come to your area. If you are a hotel, they are not coming to Boston just to stay at your hotel; they are coming to Boston to see Boston. So, the more you get to know your supplier friends, the more chance you have a receiving leads from them.

Referrals – both clients as well as supplier colleagues refer business. They talk amongst their industry peers and refer contacts and make recommendations to those who are need of services in a particular area.

A fair percentage of my booked business has come from referrals made by clients to other Tour Operators and other industry colleagues who refer their clients to us when in need of a tour to the Northeast.

Receptive Tour Operators – Get to know your local Receptive Tour Operators. We could potentially become one of your best allies. Consider Receptive Tour Operators as an extension of your sales team because we sell you! You could receive business without having to work a lead! Let us know who you are and what you have to offer and then, there is a good chance we will include you in our tour packages.

- **How do you maximize ROI through sales leads?**
- **What is the best example of a business opportunity found through lead follow up?**

Booked business – the most obvious answer is, actually turning the lead into booked business.

Customer loyalty/continued business – once business is booked, a further opportunity is to nurture the business relationship. Considering that you nailed the first piece of business by the client, it's important to nurture that relationship so that they will remain loyal and rebook with you.

Referrals – remember clients talk! If you have exceeded their expectations, chances are they will spread the good word and refer their industry colleagues to you.

- **What are two things that our audience can do today to that would generate money for their organization?**

Resurrect old leads and contacts – research your past client lists and past potential client lists and contact them. Let them know you are here and ready to do business. Ask them if you have permission to include them in your offerings. And then, depending on the type of business you have, create an offering (mail piece, e-blast) which will entice them to include you in their next visit.

Invite them - invite them for a visit! If you are an attraction, restaurant, hotel, or museum, partner up with some other local people invite them for a visit. Express to them that you are serious about wanting to do business and you would like to showcase your product. Typically, in order for client's to get excited about booking and selling you, they need to experience the product first. Give them an opportunity to experience what you have to offer.

- **Any thoughts that you might have to provoke conversation would be welcome**

Don't give up! – When following up with a lead, if it doesn't pan out, be persistent and don't give up. Ask them why they did not select you, which is a great learning tool in itself, and ask if they will consider you for the future, if they say "maybe", "perhaps", or "Yes", then stay in touch with them. Schedule them in your calendar for a quarterly call. Also, keep them informed (via new letter) of anything new you have to offer. Be persistent without being pushy. Keep up with the developing 'relationship' and remember the small details to generate conversation.

A fair share of my clients took years to work with. They either booked directly or with a competitor. I was persistent. I always made sure when I saw them at conventions, I took the time to speak with them. Ask them how they are doing, ask about their family, treat them as I would a friend, rather than a 'lead'. Why? Because people do business with people they like. I developed a report with them. And then, with time, they gave me the opportunity to do business with them.