

How an Advisor Doubled New Clients

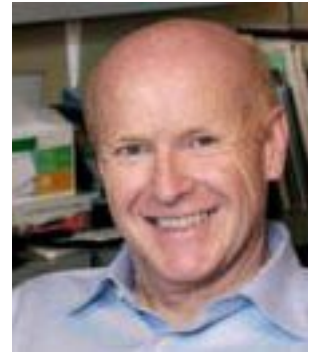
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It's not always the bold strategic initiatives that pay dividends; rather, executing the little things makes a big difference.

In the fall of 2010 I ran a workshop for advisors in which I discussed a regular focus on a short list of high priority prospects. An attendee described how he'd used this idea last year as the jumping off point to add 15 minutes to his Monday morning team meeting – and doubled the number of new clients.

Three parts are now on the agenda for his weekly team meeting, in a section is called "hot list review."



Part 1 - Progress in the past week

First, this advisor and his team talk about one to three prospects who were identified for follow up at last week's meeting. For each prospect who was highlighted, whoever was responsible for follow up (most often the advisor himself) leads a short discussion of what happened and any next steps arising from this.

Part 2 - To do in the coming week

Next, all members of the team review the "prospect hot list," typically consisting of 10 to 15 priority prospects who have shown interest over the past while. Prospects could have displayed this interest by attending an event this advisor put on for clients, via casual conversation at a community event or by a positive response during a phone conversation or meeting; they could also have been introduced by an existing client or a professional referral source.

The prospect hot list consists of five columns:

1. *Prospect name:*
2. *Hot buttons:*
3. *Last contact:*
4. *Possible follow up:*
5. *Follow up responsibility:*



The advisor and his team go through each name on the hot list, identifying opportunities to get in touch with them in the coming week. They then assign responsibility for follow up based on prospects' hot button concerns and new developments, materials or resources that respond to those concerns. Hot buttons could include investment related topics such as market valuations, interest rate forecasts, volatility and portfolio risk, diversification opportunities, global investing or opportunities in alternative investments or specific stocks or sectors; they could also include broader wealth management issues related to tax or estate planning or charitable giving strategies.

This advisor's goal is to walk out of each meeting with at least one prospect for follow up, with something concrete and specific to draw to their attention.

Part 3 - Updating the hot list

In the last section of this meeting, this advisor and his team ask two questions about the prospects on the hot list:

First, is there anyone on this list who's not really a hot prospect, who shouldn't be there?

Second, are there prospects that should be on the prospect hot list but aren't?

Why this worked

Since beginning this exercise, this advisor has seen the number of new clients double, with significant success in bringing those hot-button prospects on board.

There are four reasons for this success:

1. His discipline in concentrating on a small number of target prospects each week.
2. His consistent habit of asking prospects about the biggest concerns with regard to their finances, the questions they'd most like to answer and the problems they'd most like to solve. And his careful notation of the answers to those questions.
3. His focus on approaching prospects with new information that addresses those priority concerns.
4. His practice of making it crystal clear to prospects that he's given their situation individual thought and attention and is calling about their specific issues.

When he gets prospects' voicemail, he typically leaves a message along the lines of:

"It's Dan Richards. When we spoke last, you said you're looking at getting more exposure to emerging markets and China in particular. This week's Economist has a special report



on emerging markets. Let me know if you have 20 minutes for a coffee in the next couple of weeks, would like to sit down and discuss this."

Or this voicemail could be more specific still:

"It's Dan Richards. In our last conversation, you mentioned that you were debating what to do with your holding in Research in Motion. You may recall that I suggested selling half your holding and taking the tax hit. I'm calling because our research analyst has just come out with an update on RIM. Give me a call if you'd like to talk about this."

It's incredibly easy to get bogged down by the sheer volume of things to do each day. By focusing 15 minutes a week on his highest potential prospects, this advisor achieved significant progress in converting prospects into clients.

As you think about your business in 2012, there are lots of things you can focus on. But this simple strategy should be on your list. It worked for this advisor – and if executed with the same discipline and priority, it can work for you as well.

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