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Book Highlight: Winning the Customer

Lou Imbriano



Lou Imbriano serves as President and CEO of TrinityOne, a Marketing Strategy and Business Advisory Consultancy that works with organizations to turn around their marketing efforts and increase profitability through building stronger consumer ties and a more trustworthy brand. Although TrinityOne's specialty is in sports, its methods have been very successful with organizations outside the sports industry. Imbriano's track record in rebuilding the business side of an organization and positioning it for extreme growth is undefeated. His techniques address short-term concerns, while ensuring long-term sustainability.

Winning the Customer is all about how to maintain and grow relationships to maximize revenue. We talk about three key areas:

1. Organizational structure and systems—The Marketing Playbook
2. Relationship building—Relationship Architecture
3. Closing business—The Revenue Game.

In order to ensure that your company maximizes revenue all three areas must work harmoniously together.

The first section ~ The Marketing Playbook, will help you set up your organization to win and help you really identify and understand who's already a fan of your product—and who can become one. It will also guide you toward finding those people who are absolutely dying to spend their money with you. It all starts with transferring your business from a transactional to a relationship-oriented marketing model.

In the second section ~ Relationship Architecture, we'll show you how to connect with people in meaningful ways and give you a look at the kind of effort it takes to create significant moments that profoundly change relationships. You already know that relationship building is important for results—executives and pundits alike always stress that business is all about relationships—but what steps do you really need to take to ensure that you are forming those relationships in ways that will yield a real change in your P&L statement or enhance the kind of influence you wield. We'll show you how we managed relationships at a billion dollar company like the Patriots and at Trinity One, a small boutique agency I now own. We'll show you exactly the kinds of



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information we collect about people, how we store it, and how we use it.

In the third section ~ The Revenue Game, we'll look at the nuts and bolts sales process. We'll show you how to engage with companies and individuals to allow you to get the meeting (instead of being the guy who goes straight to voicemail and never gets a call back). We'll talk about how to bring your clients through the new business funnel to ensure you get results. You don't want to waste time exploring impossible prospects; we're going to show you how to find ones with real possibility. Finally we will show you how to build revenue as opposed to sell concepts.

It Takes Only One Change in a Process to Make a Difference

When I was a freshman at Boston College High School, I struggled to keep my grades up. What little process I had developed to get myself from taking notes in class to retaining real knowledge just wasn't working. I was totally unprepared for the rigors of BC High. One day I missed a class and had to copy notes from a bud; as I reviewed his notes, my own problem became clear to me. His handwriting was atrocious, and it took me what felt like ages to read his notes carefully and rewrite them in my notebook. However, as I wrote, I noticed that the section that I wrote slowly in my own notebook was much more legible—far more so than the notes I had jotted down during other classes. Even as I was writing, I could tell the material was beginning to stick.

I began to think differently and changed the way I was taking notes in class. I added a new notebook to the mix, taking very fast notes that were a bit sloppy and shorthand in class, then rewriting them in a different notebook in a much more deliberate and organized fashion later that night. The transfer from one notebook to the other helped amazingly with my retention of knowledge on my subjects. It makes absolute sense—the constant repetition was helping me remember—but it was remarkable how much difference that one little step made in improving my grades. That simple system helped me achieve my goals in high school, and building business relations is not

much different: if you put simple systems in place, you can grow relationships that help you achieve your goals.

Business relationships usually fail even before they begin. Quite often, a meeting with a potential new business contact is so fleeting that virtually no thought is given to structuring the relationship, and there is no follow-through. Everyone has time constraints, and unless they foresee a clear business opportunity, most people don't give a second thought to the new relationship. This is a mistake. It may seem painfully simple, but follow-through is absolutely necessary to form a mutually beneficial, long-lasting relationship.

Relationship Architecture requires that forethought and systematic planning go into forging a remarkable business relationship. If you lay the proper groundwork, you help to ensure that the relationship will be fruitful in one way or another.

How many business cards do you have in your possession or contacts in your Outlook where you have never followed up with the people you got them from after that initial meeting? If you have met as many people as I have throughout my career, that number could be mind-boggling. I'll be the first to admit that over the years, I have squandered many initial meetings and didn't invest in each the way I should have. I reiterate: this is a big mistake.

Designing a Business Operations Model Built for Revenue

A product alone does not create fans of a brand; it's the harmonious dance between the product and its positioning that does so. The teamwork between product design and marketing is crucial to ensure maximum growth. While the owners of the Patriots were working to rebuild the product, the team, and the stadium, our group was charged with developing a marketing structure that would win customers, regardless of the team's wins and losses.

I want to pause here because I realize that it's easy to believe that winning on the field solves everything. Yes, winning on the field is awesome, but without the right structure and plan in place, it's impossible to capitalize on those wins. Similarly, you may have the best product for sale, a product that's far better than your closest competitor's, but if your business structure isn't built to support it efficiently, you are not marketing it properly, and you're neglecting to create relationships with your consumer, you will never maximize your revenue opportunity. Always remember, revenue begins with the product; it doesn't end there.

It was clear from the outset at the Patriots that we had to build a different model to secure financial sustainability—we had to become relationship-oriented. Hoping that we'd have enough sponsors at every contract expiration just wasn't going to work. With the new, relational approach, we still marketed team assets like signs, media, and logo rights, but we sold them just to recognize revenue. The real business deal was to identify the sponsors' needs and goals and show how we could help accomplish them. Our job became not to "sell" anything; our primary function became to help our partners do business.

To do this effectively, we first had to change the structure of our department and how we operated to get into position to build strong relationships; everyone's job description and list of responsibilities changed so that we could invest our efforts in learning about our partners' businesses and what would help them succeed, which included learning as much as possible about the individuals within the company. We stopped being transactional salespeople and evolved into relationship architects.