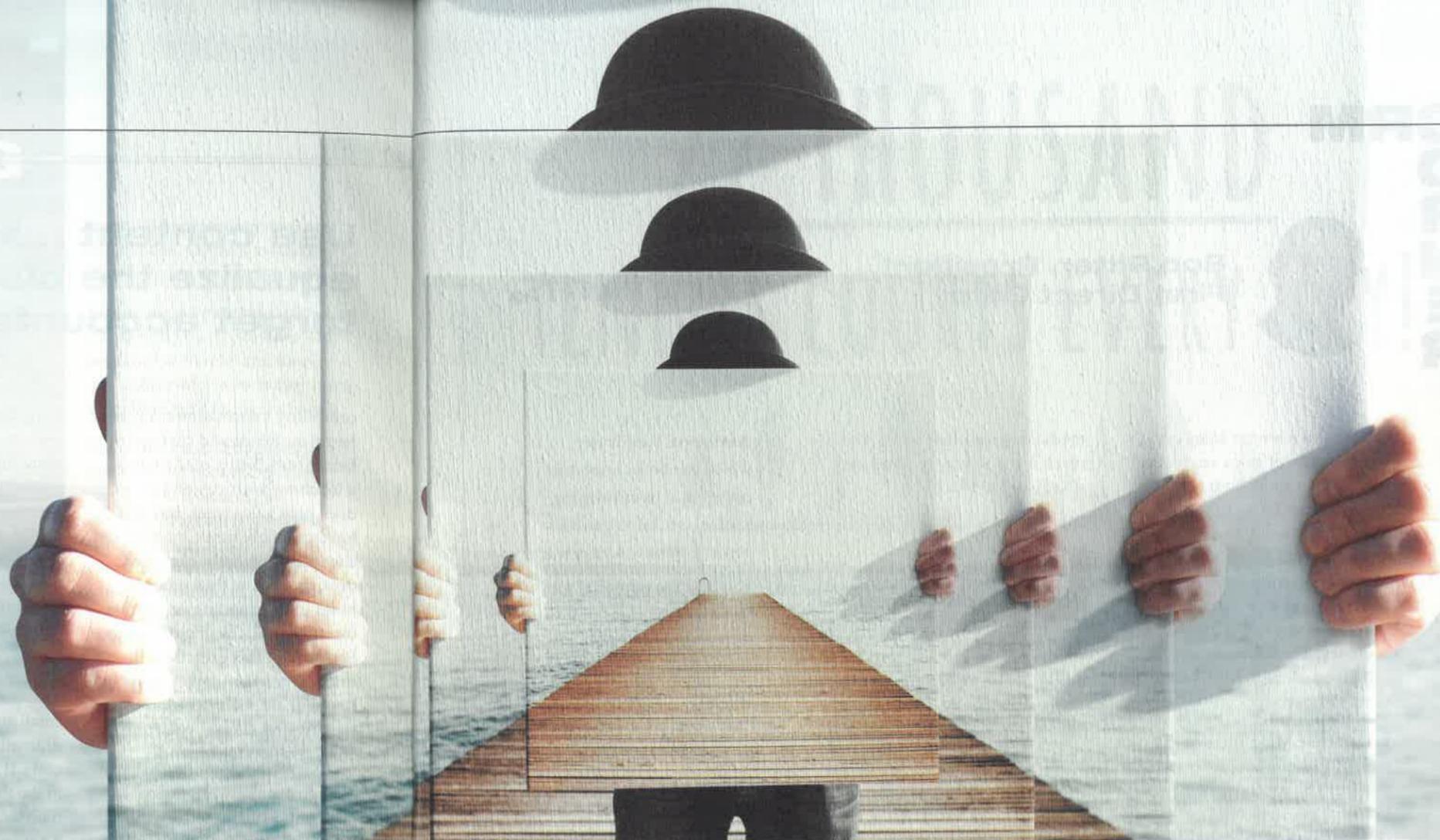


MARKETING

The Power of Repetition and Staying in Touch

BY BOB RITTER



In sales, customer relationship management is arguably the crux of any sales professional's career, a pivotal yet delicate matter that can make or break a deal and even one's livelihood. Bob Ritter, president of First Direct Corp., knows this well. In this column, Bob imparts his more than 25 years of industry experience, with thoughts and tips on how to best manage customer relationships. This month, learn why repetition is key, and how losing touch can cost business.

8 Smart Reasons to Use Repetition

We hear the word repetition used over and over again in marketing. Especially from anyone trying to sell us advertising. Maybe they're just trying to sell us something, or maybe they know something we don't. Here's what I know about the

power of repetition and what it can do for you.

1. The right place at the right time. If the timing isn't right, it may not matter how good your overall message is. Today's consumer suffers from information overload. People are too overloaded to pay

attention to things that are of low or no priority to them. They may buy your product or service a month from now, but if you are a month early or a month late, you lose. Repetition improves the odds of being in the right place at the right time.

2. The right message. Life has been called a "moving parade," and there's always something new passing by. What interests one may not interest another. Repetition gives you more opportunities to appear before your prospect with something of interest to them. Each new communication affords the marketer or salesperson the opportunity to try a new, albeit congruent, message. What works for one prospect may not be effective with another. Altering your message gives you a chance to appeal to more people.

3. Easier for the consumer. Making it easier for the consumer can lift response. Repetition puts your offer in front of the consumer, making it easier to find what they're looking for. (Assuming that they were in the market for your product or service.)

Plus, repeating certain information inside an offer, such as a phone number or website, makes it easier for them to respond.

4. Residual effect. Each marketing message has an impact that leaves a residual impression in the mind of our prospective consumer. Even if they don't act on it, as long as we capture their attention and interest, our marketing can have some lasting, residual effect. This can have a positive influence on the strength of subsequent marketing and sales communications. In other words, past communications can increase our ability to motivate our consumer in future communications.

5. Top-of-mind awareness. Building brand recognition is a long accepted mission for marketing, but purely

institutional or brand-awareness advertising is out of financial reach for many businesses. Most organizations have shifted over to direct response advertising where the emphasis is on motivating our consumer to take some form of action. With repetitive direct response communications, you can also build top-of-mind awareness.

6. Relationship development. To build and maintain any relationship, you need to stay in touch. Repeated communication allows for this to occur over time, and hopefully yield a strong rapport.

7. Thin Out Your Competition. Studies show that the majority of people who inquire on a product or service eventually purchase it. In many industries, especially



**Bob Ritter, President,
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those with a longer sales cycle, the majority of sales are made after five or more contacts. Yet less than 10 percent of salespeople make five or more contacts. This is one important explanation for why 80 percent of sales go to less than 20 percent of salespeople in any industry. Therefore, repetitive follow-up alone will thin out your competition.

8. Database Maintenance. As you follow up with prospects, you learn about changes in information. Key contacts change along with their contact information. You have more opportunity to collect missing information. You increase the value and usefulness of your database through repetition.

What Happens When You Don't Stay In Touch

Do you have a good friend from childhood with whom you are not friends today? We all do, and there's a good chance the chemistry would still be there if you ran into one another again. So why is that friendship lost? In many cases the answer is as simple as, "We lost touch with one another."

If you had good news or something exciting or interesting that you wanted to share with a good friend today, you might do so through social

media or give them a call. You'd reach out one way or another; you'd stay in touch.

Maintaining a relationship in business is not far off from maintaining a personal relationship. Keep it real — try to avoid pressure — but don't fall off the map.

Falling off the map with prospects and customers is as damaging as doing so with personal contacts. Only, in the case of business, it can cost you your livelihood. The damaging effects are more than you may realize.

5 Damaging Effects of Losing Touch with Prospect and Customers

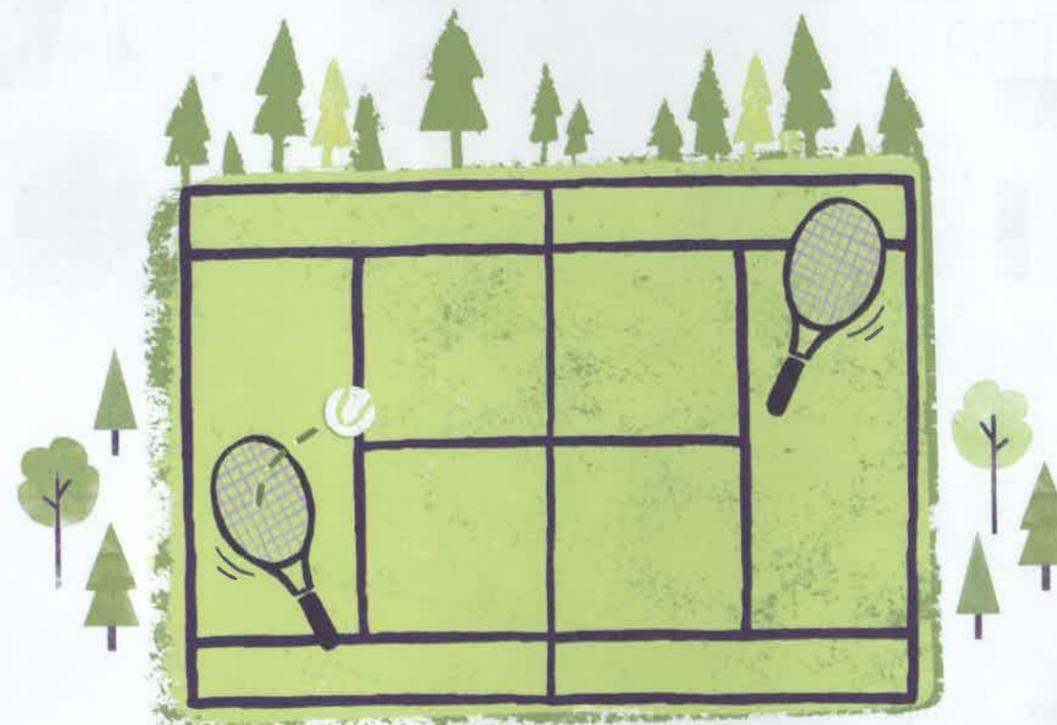
1. **Prospects make decisions without you and move on.** They opt for competitive solutions. Their priorities change and the window of opportunity may close.
2. **Your information becomes outdated.** Your prospect's decision maker or contact person may have changed. Database accuracy erodes rapidly. A B2B list can be as much as 50 percent less valuable in just two years. Staying in touch is the most practical way of keeping your database current.
3. **They forget about you. Name recognition is lost.** Your brand power is not

developed. Familiarity, which can be an important contributor in developing trust, is crucial to the sales process, otherwise it gets lost.

4. **You lose the potential for "being in the right place at the right time."** Timing is everything in sales. If you're too early, you won't get their attention and interest. If you're too late, you've lost the deal. Staying in touch increases the odds that the timing of your offer will fit the timing needs and priorities of your prospect.
5. **Opportunities to "stay in the loop" are missed.** Without staying in touch, you lose the knowledge of situations with your prospect or customer that are crucial to the sales process. Chances to cross-sell and deepen your account value are missed. And potentially critical customer service issues may not be identified. ■

Bob Ritter is the president of First Direct Corp. He is a certified CRM professional with over 25 years of industry experience. Contact Bob at 845.221.3800, ext. 101, or visit his business at www.1stdirect.com.

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