



Beyond the  
Pandemic

# How to Reengage with Your Customers and Grow Your Revenue



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## Reengaging with Your Customers

*In March of 2020, we entered a place in history we could not have imagined. Many of us assumed we would only see our businesses interrupted for a limited amount of time. As salespeople, we thought we would be back selling face-to-face in no time.*

*We now know that the time frame kept expanding. We had to find ways to sustain revenue with new methods. We had to deliver help to our customers in ways we were often making up as we went along.*

*It is now time to review the lessons, keep some of the new ideas firmly in place, and most of all, reengage with our customers with face-to-face meetings as soon as they are comfortable.*

### What did we, and our advertisers, learn?

Going through the Phoenix International Airport one afternoon in 2019, an ad for a new conferencing software called Zoom was showing on the digital displays as one of our ANC team members rode the moving sidewalk. It sounded interesting and the app was downloaded at the departure gate.

Zoom seemed like a cool way to hold meetings without the travel. The ANC team reviewed it and began using it for meetings. We were not alone but Zoom had a long way to go to be widely accepted.

Then the pandemic happened, and everyone was Zooming. Newspaper advertisers' learning curves happened over the course of a weekend during family chats. We had a new sales tool!

In addition to the learning curve for Zoom and similar video conferencing tools being shortened, so too was the curve on PDF usage, e-signatures, calendar programs, and other useful tools. We were suddenly able to work with advertisers in new ways and saw some accounts make transitions that were surprising.

Microsoft's CEO, Satya Nadella, remarked that as the pandemic affected every aspect of life and work, "We saw two years of digital transformation in two months," he said.

While we were able to supplement our sales efforts with these new tools, advertisers still want to meet the advertising representatives they have come to know, like, and trust. We are now hearing terms like "Zoom Fatigue" that is defined by Stanford University as, "design flaws that exhaust the human mind and body."

It is time to reengage with our customers face-to-face. It does not mean we throw out everything we have learned. In the remainder of this e-Book, we will look at ways to reengage, keep some of the new tools in play, and even dig deeper into resolving screen fatigue.

*Note: You or your company may have a highly skilled group of Inside Sales professionals. This content does not take away from that key function. Many of the points can easily be adapted and adopted.*

# Reengaging: Face-to-Face is Back!

## The Human Part

As more North Americans are vaccinated, the flow of business moves back to normal. State-by-state, province-by-province, we see restaurants, retailers, and offices reopening to the public. Along with the reopening is your advertising clients and prospects willingness to meet face-to-face.

At a southwestern US newspaper recently, an ad rep was working with an ANC team member to set appointments for a revenue campaign.

“I am nervous,” she admitted. “I have not seen my customers since last March. What if they don’t want to see me?” Cutting to the chase, of 32 appointments made, 4 customers asked for virtual sales call.

“Are you getting back here to see us?” was the most asked question the reps at this newspaper received. And the advertisers asked that question with enthusiasm. Why? One reason is that it was another indication of normal.

As humans, we read certain signals in face-to-face meetings that are missed in the Zoom calls. As salespeople, we do not get to see the light conversational cues the best salespeople pick up on during face-to-face meetings.



“Is that a new grandchild in that picture?”, often becomes three minutes of light conversation that build relationships. It is also a noteworthy point we record in our CRM for our next visit (How’s that granddaughter?).

Reengagement begins with the human interaction. It begins with warmth. Spend the initial reengaging time reconnecting with your customer. And even though the face-to-face interaction may still include a mask, human eye contact communicates a great deal. As an example, we smile with our eyes.

During a recent conversation with an Oregon sales leader, he mentioned that an advertising rep hired during the pandemic verbalized a shocking reality.

“It is so much easier to sell face-to-face then over Zoom!”, the rep exclaimed.

This excitement is a great reminder that reengagement is exciting for everyone! How many social media posts have you seen recently where people announce they are doing things that were perfectly normal in the first part of 2020. “We went out to eat!” has become a big deal.

As the state was opening post-pandemic, a sales team in California was making outbound calls to prospects. The calls were to make sales appointments to sell a screen entertainment guide. During a halfway point discussion one rep said, “The customers were happy to hear we were coming in person!”

## The Disengaging from Your Screen Part

Okay. Let us have a serious talk. It is time for you to spend less time with the ones you love. Yes, it is hard to do. But this relationship is not healthy. We are, of course, referring to your computer, laptop, and tablet screens.

During the pandemic, the big joke has been that some salespeople have gotten through all of Netflix (or Hulu, Amazon Prime, etc.) and are starting all over again. Funny but maybe too close to the truth. Many salespeople can probably confess that they snuck a few episodes in through their days working from home. That must stop.

Another truism is that, because of the new tools we mention above, we have become darned efficient at putting them to use. You must ask yourself if any of these efficiencies have now become a reason to NOT interact with your customers.

ANC founder, Tm Dellinger, is a phone call master and he often reminds his team to use the phone instead of email on certain communications. His friendly and smiling voice toned, “How’s it going?” is his signature way to begin a conversation. In a five-minute discussion that could have easily been an email, Tim

accomplishes what he needs to accomplish, makes a touch point, and you feel great at the conclusion. It is a great reminder of getting away from the screen and using human connection. So, use the phone more and email less. Call and ask for a face-to-face meeting. Look for reasons to get away from your screens.



## The Begin to Measure Your Time Part

According to a recent Harvard Business Review article (Selling After the Crisis, by Frank V. Cespedes, From the Magazine -March–April 2021), “Salespeople typically spend less than a third of their time interacting with customers. This represents a big opportunity.”

How are you spending your time? If you fit into the above article quote, what are you spending the other 2/3's of your time doing?

In ANC's Sales Advantage training, we often observe the salespeople utilizing their time inefficiently. Your title is SALES, not data entry, email junky, or official reality show recap host of your office (ouch).

Many newspapers used the pandemic time to update systems, add CRM programs, and recast processes. The problem is that many inefficient salespeople use these changes as a crutch. They dwell on the change instead of quickly learning what they need to learn to keep on selling.

Smart salespeople accept that change is guaranteed, that they do not have to become the new system experts initially, and that they will learn more along the way. These people know their job is to be with customers and to sell. The updated technology part will come as they sell.





# Reengaging with Knowledge and Solutions

## The Knowledge Part

Our advertisers should be able to depend on us as business partners. During this past year, we have heard many stories of business change and survival. Reflect on that a minute. Even jot a few down. As a business partner, we must research the advertiser's business BEFORE we even step foot into their building. It is our job to pull from various resources and not show up and simply ask the customer what is going on in their business.

Questions like, "So what's new with your business?" or even "How's business?" can be answered with 5-10 minutes of concentrated online research. Also answered during that research is what the advertiser is currently doing to attract customers. Visits to their social media posts will give clues.

This online research gives you the knowledge to get beyond the surface questions and to reengage with observations, suggestions, and to be able to ask clarifying questions.

Next is the three-part knowledge based and knowledge gathering conversation with your customer:

### Knowledge Gathering Part 1 – I Wonder

- *"I see that you are promoting a new higher end lawn tractor brand in a Facebook post."*
- *"You are getting limited engagement on that post."*
- *"I noticed your website doesn't include the new brand."*

### Knowledge Gathering Part 2 – I Suggest

- *"A video of the equipment would go a long way on posts and your website."*
- *"An email blast to people interested in yard work could net quick results."*
- *"A combined print presence will get the new brand to people with the expendable income."*

### Knowledge Gathering Part 3 – I Prod

- *"Do you know if the brand offers co-op advertising and your status?"*
- *"Is there a market schematic the manufacturer provided to you that I could take and study?"*
- *"Who do you think your target customer is and how are you reaching them currently?"*

As you can see, these observations and questions are far beyond the standard, "So, how's business?" start that some lazy salespeople use to begin a meeting.

If you are going to reengage with your customer successfully, you need to value their time and ask the right questions.

Remember, your advertisers did not get into their businesses to become marketing experts. That is your job. Take your job more seriously as you reengage.

## The Solutions Part: Become Your Customers' Marketing Partner

During a recent conversation with a marketing professional, he pondered why newspapers do not approach potential customers as THE marketing partners.

As a result of some back and forth, scenario building, and deep experience, this conversation led to a natural way for newspapers to work their way towards becoming the total marketing solution without throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Stated clearly, don't throw print newspapers out of the presentation, make it the foundation from which to build.



As you reengage with your customers, we pondered this conversation:

*“Ms. Advertiser, I can put your business in front of some of a dedicated audience, and this audience has expendable income. A well-designed ad with a call to action in the pages of our newspaper is how to reach them.*”

*Let me also ask you this: “If I can put you in front of people interested in your product on our website along with other websites, would that interest you?”*

Then next:

*“Also, if I could deliver your message to people that are interested in your competitor, is that something you would want me to do?”*

At this stage, an advertiser might tell you that they have someone else working on those things. Your response can be:

*“Let me show you what I can do for you as your marketing partner. In addition, I can show you some excellent video solutions (pre-roll) and email marketing opportunities.”*

With this approach, you are not stepping away from the newspaper roots of your newspaper. Instead, you are reminding them that they can reengage with their local newspaper company who can also become their business's marketing partner.



Simon Hares, the principal of [SerialTrainer7](#), a Bath, England based training consultant and coach with deep media sales experience has a strong opinion on newspaper selling.

“Newspapers need to stop selling space and start selling response with immediate effect, said Hares. “Sell the power of the audience every time. How much is that reader worth?” Hares says.

Hares suggests we ask about the advertiser’s customer,” What are they buying? Why are they buying? Why should they buy from you? Why should they buy from you now?” he said.

Hares thinks sales professionals need to use the audience in your sales process and collaborate with the client. “We will provide you with an audience that is worth \$\$\$XXX, how will you go about retaining them once you have them?” he suggests you ask.

“Selling is the opportunity to talk about your audience. Selling audience is what you should be doing,” Hares stated.

## The Change Part

### The Nimble and Pivot Part

Two words that have come up during the pandemic are ‘nimble’ and ‘pivot’. We also covered them in our previous eBook “Five Ways to Change Your Sales Approach”. You can download it [HERE](#).

Chances are, at your newspaper, you are covering **more** accounts with some sort of updated system or procedure. As a result, you have two choices:

1. Curl up into the fetal position (figuratively or literally) and seriously dampen your sales productivity
2. Pivot and reevaluate your time and approach to selling. Nimbly adjust your workflow to keep on selling and complete data entry on the go

Salespeople can become creatures of habit. The workday, if not managed carefully, does not crank up to full productivity until past 10 AM for some salespeople. It then comes to a screeching halt for lunch followed by more ramp up time in the afternoon. Then, whoops, only enough time to “deal with” one customer before we have got to be back in front of the screen clicking at keys until quitting time. And, like the haircare bottle says, rinse and repeat every day.

**That is not a recipe for success.**

Sales is a professional career. Our advertisers depend on us to know our stuff and to be in front of them presenting fresh, new ideas. When we do that successfully, we are awarded with their sale and close business. If you are stuck in the rinse and repeat cycle described above, you need to escape it immediately.

Take action and try these suggestions:

- Get to work/office 30 minutes earlier each day
- Get organized or reorganized – seek new solutions to managing your workflow
- Review your plan for the day. Decide which tasks are your highest priorities and accomplish them first
- Act on the things that immediately have an affect revenue (messages, emails, order entry, etc.)
- Review your Customer Appointments/Contacts/Touches for the day
- Research your Customers and Prepare
- Seek new prospects by asking your best customers to recommend others that could use your help
- Dedicate time to setting appointments each week. You cannot depend on in person Cold Calling
- Spend 60% of your day in front of customers
- Rehearse. Know what you are going to say and have a plan to respond to questions, concerns, and objections
- Use technology to prevent sprinting back to the office. Seek out apps and use Wi-Fi hotspots for your laptop along the way

## The Measuring Part

One of ANC's partner newspapers has a bright advertising director whose star is rising. We asked her the secret to the success of her team. The answer is one word: Measure.

This Ohio based ad executive asks her staff to work on and be measured by a 100-point scale. It is broken down like this:

- 50 Points – Attaining the Monthly Revenue Goal
- 10 Points – A minimum of Five Daily Entries into the CRM
- 10 Points – The Use of Coop for Either Print, Digital, or Both
- 10 Points – The Use of the Proposal Tool to Answer Needs Analysis
- 20 Points – Digital Contract Attainment

Notice that there is an emphasis on Digital, but it is not the entire measurement. In fact, using the philosophy of being the customer's marketing partner, that will be a natural part of the solution. An example of this is video pre-roll. Offering a 30 second pre-roll option to a customer will place them alongside national brands. The production of video that used to cost thousands now costs hundreds. Previously a newspaper could not comfortably pitch video. Today it can be a natural part of a newspaper's offering.

And, by the way, you do not have to be the boss to use the scale above. If you are the sales professional, measure yourself using this scale. You will lead the pack by attaining the 100 points each month. You will be a successful sales professional that has reengaged with your customers

# The Celebration Part

## So now what?

You follow the tips in the eBook, you get on the phone and people say “yes” to appointments. You get back to face-to-face meetings with your customers, only this time you approach every customer as their business partner. You suggest solutions, and your customers chooses you to handle their marketing needs. You manage your time efficiently making sure you are in front of your customers. You serve the needs of businesses in your community and start to see your reputation bring more business your way.

Most importantly, you can give yourself 100 POINTS at the end of the month and every month thereafter. You are a Newspaper Sales Professional.

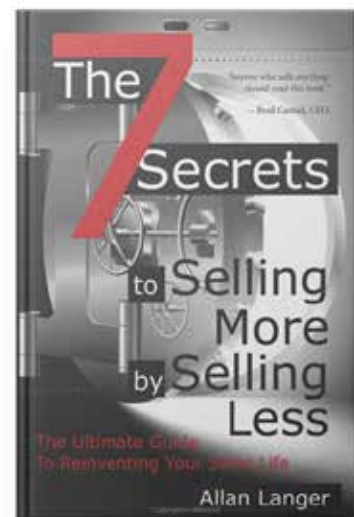
In his book “The 7 Secrets to Selling More by Selling Less”, [Allan Langer](#) reminds us to “Self-Adulate” or to “Praise yourself to yourself. Not to anyone else”. He uses the firefly to make the point of celebrating themselves by letting their light glow and lighting the world around them ever so briefly.

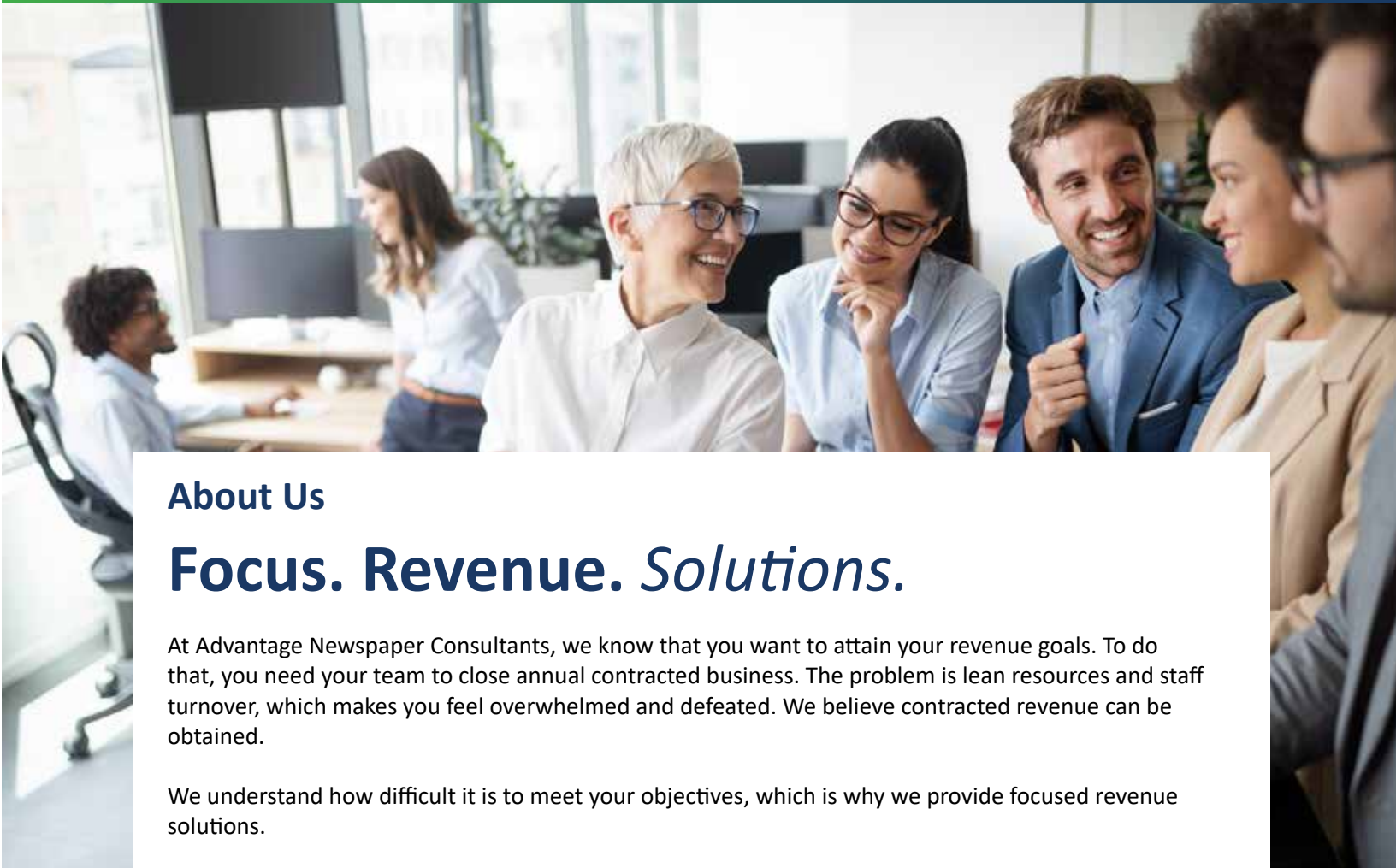
In the book, Langer writes, “So as part of your calibration, as part of your motivation, and as part of rewarding yourself, you need to practice self-adulation. Celebrate yourself like a firefly. Light yourself up as much as you can. Be happy with that phone call you just made, or that email you just wrote, or that customer you just helped.”

Langer points out that self-adulation, not bragging or constantly talking about ourselves, will have you attracting, “a whole lot of other fireflies.”

Being a successful, sales professional requires focus and energy. Hitting your revenue goals requires you to seek fresh solutions and presenting them to your customer constantly.

Enjoy reengaging with your customers! Please let us know how we can help along the way.





## About Us

# Focus. Revenue. *Solutions.*

At Advantage Newspaper Consultants, we know that you want to attain your revenue goals. To do that, you need your team to close annual contracted business. The problem is lean resources and staff turnover, which makes you feel overwhelmed and defeated. We believe contracted revenue can be obtained.

We understand how difficult it is to meet your objectives, which is why we provide focused revenue solutions.

Here's how we do it:

1. We work with you to develop a revenue generating product.
2. We set a goal and prepare your team.
3. We provide focus and close business with your team

So, call or email to focus on a revenue solution today. And in the meantime, watch our videos at:

<https://newspaperconsultants.com/videos/>

