

Case Study Series: What's Working in Marketing & Selling Professional Services

Book Publishing Helps Consultant 'Score More Sales'

By M. Sharon Baker

Overview

For years, Lori Richardson of Score More Sales shared her sales tips and strategies with large organizations nationwide that paid her to super-charge their sales teams. She showed them how to think differently and take actionable steps to reach their goals.

Situation

But when the recession hit, large corporations cut back their training monies, leaving the Seattle area consultant with a revenue hole to fill. Small businesses, organizations, and entrepreneurs began calling her, but often they couldn't afford her or wanted her to speak for free. "I struggled with how to create revenues out of these opportunities," she says. "And I kind of wrote off ever making money with small businesses."

Approach

Richardson wanted to help the small businesses she met. In mid 2008, "I noticed many small business owners were waiting for the word that the economy was getting better or they were waiting for big businesses or the government so they weren't innovating or listening to their customers enough."

Richardson realized she had a wealth of knowledge – sales tips, strategies and helpful motivations – that she could turn into a physical book, one that she could leave behind, have an organization buy in bulk, or sell at the back of the room during speaking engagements. But actually writing a book seemed overwhelming. She had written a few ebooks but never made money from them.

Earlier in her career, Richardson had rejected the idea of writing a book to establish herself as an expert – a long coveted credential sought by many service professionals and speakers. "I turned a blind eye to it because it just seemed so silly to me that one was needed to land better speaking engagements," she says. "I also thought writing a book would be too hard. The authors I knew were always talking about how challenging it was and how long it took."

Overcome the Fear and Challenge of Writing a Book

Known for her ability to quickly propose alternative solutions to challenging obstacles – a trait that helped her consistently reach multi-million sales marks as a top salesperson – Richardson figured out a way to conquer her book-writing fear and also get the job done in short order.

First, she realized she didn't have to write the consummate book on selling. Then, after thinking about the reason for her success, she decided the key information she shared was how to help sales teams reconnect with ideas they may have forgotten or never learned.

"I decided I could do a simple book, one with powerful messages; not overly complex or overly detailed," Richardson says. "This way it would encourage people wanting more information and tips to do business with me." She also realized delivering inspiration and tips in byte-sized, just-in-time chunks allowed readers to grab the information quickly, and it made thinking about and writing the book much easier for her.

Initially, her idea was to write a book containing 50 sales inspirations. "I saw that many small business owners needed inspiration to grow their businesses," she says. "But then I thought, it's one thing to be inspired, but quite another to get into action, to get inspired and pick up the phone. You can be inspired all day long but if you don't take action, nothing is going to happen." So she added 50 companion sales tips.

No Book Agents, Large Publishing Houses, or Huge Budgets Needed

Once she decided on the content, Richardson wrote *50 Ways in 50 Days – Inspiration and Tips to Fearlessly Energize Your Business and Score More Sales* in less than five weeks. She spent under \$1,000 for graphic design and to self publish the book using the print-on-demand firm Lulu.com. Because "publishing a book" wasn't her goal, and because she created a tips book, she knew she didn't have to spend \$5,000 to \$15,000 or six to 12 months many people spend taking the conventional path to writing a book.

Using a print-on-demand company allowed Richardson to set the price of her book, reap all of the profits after her costs, and meant she could print a small run upfront.

"Once the book was done, my focus was to generate revenue at free and paid gigs," Richardson says. "And that doesn't just naturally happen."

Signage was important, she learned after several customers thought *50 Ways in 50 Days* was free and walked off with several copies. And she learned that crafting her speech around certain tips helped drive book sales. "You have to present your information in such a way that lets them know you have some great information to share and that there are several ways to get additional information," Richardson says.

A little marketing pizzazz could also boost book sales, she learned. Richardson's first major speaking engagement with *50 Ways in 50 Days* was a talk to about 80 women business owners in early 2009. She packaged the bright yellow-jacketed book in cellophane, tied it with a yellow ribbon and placed the books on a display table covered with a yellow tablecloth. She put a yellow foam hard hat on the table and wore a hat that looked like a bee as part of her topic that day, which was how to make selling fun. "It was a big hit," she says.

Richardson also packaged the book with phone-based coaching. Sales at that first outing were more than \$3,000. And she's never had a "free" engagement since.

Package with Other Services; Use Books as Calling Cards and to Connect

Richardson added a companion workbook after realizing that many first-time entrepreneurs needed help learning how to grow their businesses, and for her second book, *360 Degrees of the Customer*, she co-authored the book with colleagues offering different areas of expertise, which made the chore of writing easier and faster.

"My third book, *Change the Way You See Sales – Through Asset Based Thinking*, is a book for an existing series, which is another great way to get a book off the ground," Richardson says. She landed the third book writing opportunity after noticing that the idea of Asset-Based Thinking really tied in to people's attitude about sales. She approached the series' authors, who loved the idea of an additional book in their series.

In addition to selling *50 Ways in 50 Days* at speaking engagements, Richardson uses the book as a calling card and as a way to get back in touch with past clients. "I sent a copy of my latest book to a former client I had lost touch with for a couple of years as a way to rekindle a conversation," she says. "And he thought it was great and rehired me for another training gig." Richardson also landed several national speaking engagements after sending her books as part of her introduction package.

Results

In just seven months, *50 Ways in 50 Days*, a companion workbook and subsequent consulting deals put \$70,000 in Richardson's pocket. And it helped her shift her business from one where 80 percent of her revenues were coming from large corporations to a healthier 50 percent split with half now coming from small businesses, business organizations, and entrepreneurs. Richardson's goal for 2010 is to bring her sales expertise to 50 cities to give small businesses new ideas to grow their revenues and survive the recession. "People literally forget the basics that grow business day in and day out, which is very lucky for me," Richardson says.

Additional Insights from Score More Sales' Lori Richardson

- **It's not difficult to create a book, but make sure you get the help of several experts** when putting it together. Richardson's first graphic designer had never laid out a book, and the page numbers and other graphical elements looked odd during her first proof. She also suggests having an editor review the final document for spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors as it is hard to catch your own mistakes.
- **Start with content you've developed and think about how to repurpose it** to create a book or program of some type.
- **No content? Brainstorm with trusted advisors or colleagues.** Sometimes other people familiar with your company have lots of ideas even though you may struggle with what to write about, Richardson says.
- **Books are extremely beneficial as a calling card.** They give people a taste of who you are, and add to your credibility.
- **When you use the book as an introduction, make sure you focus on how the book might help your target** rather than saying 'Here's my book.' Say "I thought some of these tips might be helpful and easy to implement among your team." How you connect is important, Richardson says.

RESOURCES

New Book: "*Change the Way You See Sales*" available June, 2010

Website: www.scoremoresales.com

Twitter: www.twitter.com/scoremoresales

Facebook: www.facebook.com/scoremoresales