



## Qualify All the Time

*By Tom Hopkins*

While the qualification process is critical in making an initial sale to clients, it's not something you can do once and forget about it. In challenging times, you may need to continually re-qualify existing clients. When anything changes, think of them as if they're new clients all over again. The key element is what they might want or need to change about their current situation. You can never assume you know whether or not they remain highly qualified candidates for your product or service.

Changes that are impacting just one of your clients could be making an impact on all of them. Fastco manufacturing might be a good client when they're running three shifts each day. But with any change in their production, such as cutting out a shift, or running 24/5 instead of 24/7, their needs may change...and your services may need to change as well. Maybe they're no longer an ideal candidate for product X that you offer. Getting in there and truly working to serve their needs might show that they've become a better candidate for product Y. If you had just let them ride along with product X, they may have been tempted away by a competitor who pointed out a different solution to their needs.

No matter what the times are, there are always niche markets that grow and prosper. If you're not in regular contact with your existing clients, you can't assume they're all faring the same.

If Carol's Cookie Cupboard is experiencing an increase in business, they may need more of what you're currently supplying them. Be considerate of their time—especially if their business is on the rise, but be prepared to ask qualifying questions every time you visit them.

“Carol, when you invested in your first two commercial grade ovens from our company, you had just moved into this space. Now, look at you! You've expanded into another part of the building. You have three new bakers on staff and are offering free delivery. Aren't you proud of this accomplishment?

I'm curious, with how well your business is growing, how soon do you think you'll have a need for a third oven?”

It could very well be that Carol hadn't given it a thought in all the busy-ness of her days. When you

bring it up, she just might realize how much more efficient they could be with a third oven and come to the conclusion that it's time to expand her cooking facilities now.

Constant qualification is a key to continuous growth in your ability to close more sales.

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