

# WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO INCREASE YOUR CUSTOMER BASE?

Entrepreneurs share how they get more business

UPCOMING

**FEB. 18:**  
**INNOVATOR'S TOOLKIT**  
**SERIES: MARKET DISCOVERY**  
 A session aimed at providing innovators with an understanding of how to bring a tangible market connection to their innovation  
 ■ When: 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.  
 ■ Where: Alastair Ross Technology Centre (3553 31st St. NW)  
 ■ Admission: \$125. Learn more at [innovatecalgary.com](http://innovatecalgary.com)

**FEB. 26:**  
**HOW DO YOU MAKE YOUR BUSINESS BIGGER AND BETTER?**  
 A monthly panel discussion hosted by Capital Ideas  
 ■ When: 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.  
 ■ Where: Glenbow Museum (130 9th Ave. SE)  
 ■ Admission: Free. Register at [capitalideas3.eventbrite.com](http://capitalideas3.eventbrite.com)

For more great events, visit [capitalideascalgary.com/calgaryevents](http://capitalideascalgary.com/calgaryevents).

COMMUNITY QUESTION

## How do you keep your current customers coming back for more?



Securing repeat business is crucial to the success of any entrepreneur, but keeping your company relevant with your target customer base can sometimes be a challenge. That's why **Ryan Hnetka**, founder and CEO of **App Guys** ([appguys.ca](http://appguys.ca)), is curious to hear from you: **How do you keep your current customers coming back for more?**  
 You can answer the question in two ways: Open today's Capital Ideas email if you're a member or visit [capitalideascalgary.com](http://capitalideascalgary.com).  
 We'll publish the best answers, along with your business name and website address, on Feb. 19.

# CAPITAL IDEAS

Business owners helping business owners

JOIN US!

- ✓ Get expert advice on your biggest challenges
- ✓ Share insights with entrepreneurs like you
- ✓ Appear in the Calgary Herald

SIGN UP AT:  
[capitalideascalgary.com](http://capitalideascalgary.com)



**Kamea Zelisko**, owner of **MKT Communications** ([mktcommunications.ca](http://mktcommunications.ca)), says that despite having lots of strategies to increase her customer base, one thing works in particular. "I've found that I've had the most luck with getting out there and just meeting people in person, whether it's cold calling or networking. Being able to shake someone's hand, look them in the eye and start building trust with them seems to be the most effective way to build and keep customers." *PHOTO BY MCLEVIN IMAGE STUDIOS*



**"Maintaining awareness of the big picture**, listening to what people are saying, synthesizing information, and connecting the dots to provide a solution that makes practical sense for the client. In other words, engaging the client or prospect on their level by responding to their business objectives, priorities, specific needs or process."  
*Elizabeth Brueckner, founder and principal of G.K. Hills Tank Inspection, [gkhills.com](http://gkhills.com)*



**"The number of customers you will have** is a result of two things that you can control and improve: Lead generation and conversion rate ... The most important strategy to increase these two is to test and measure your current lead generation and conversion rates. We can't improve what we don't manage, and we can't manage what we don't measure."  
*Jarrod Stanton, general manager at Business Edge Coaching, [businessedgecoaching.com](http://businessedgecoaching.com)*



**"To be successful, you need a balanced harmony** between marketing and selling. The problem is, most businesses focus too much time and resources on the sexy stuff, like marketing. You can create the expensive, glossy brochure or design a great website coupled with cool social media, but that simply creates a lot of exposure. The way I have sustained success and increased my customer base is by focusing more on selling. I came to realize that my success is dependent on my close ratio, not my brochure."  
*Tim Breithaupt, founder and president of Spectrum Training Solutions, [spectrumtraining.ca](http://spectrumtraining.ca)*



**"We think of our clients as more than just 'clients.'** We take an active interest to understand their businesses with a vision of cultivating an ongoing partnership. With this honest and sincere approach, we exceed client expectations, resulting in word-of-mouth advertising and referrals."  
*Kris Hans, strategist at Market Grade, [marketgrade.com](http://marketgrade.com)*



**"We provide a business-to-business service,** and in the past nine years, we've stuck to cold calls, which account for 55 per cent of our customer base. Cold calling is about educating your customers first, being consistent, and respecting people's time. Customer referrals have accounted for 35 per cent of our customer base, because our company is very much relationship-driven and customer-focused. When you treat people like family, referrals from your customers come naturally ... Lastly, prospecting on Twitter has ... allowed us to immediately reach out to a large business audience at the click of a button and engage in direct conversations."  
*Nelson Liem, founder and president of eXmerce Barter Inc., [exmerce.com](http://exmerce.com)*



**ATB Business**

These answers are in response to a question posed by **Wellington Holbrook**, executive vice-president of ATB Business. Here's his take:

"Over the years, I have seen many promising businesses stumble because they became too reliant on one or two of their customers. It is always terrible to see businesses run into difficulty because the prospects or strategies of an important client change. But yet it happens all the time. As a small business, an important strategy to reduce the risk of running your business is to be as diversified with your client base as possible. Lots of things can be done to increase your client base, and depending on your business, the how might be very different. For service businesses, it might be about growing your network. For retail businesses, it might be about finding new creative ways to raise your profile. The bottom line, particularly in a more challenging economic environment, is that if you are running a small business you want to have the broadest customer base that you realistically can."



**"I have started more often** to ask for orders instead of assuming they will come in. Utilizing analytics allows me to find clients as well. Next, I have taken to social media to advertise in addition to becoming an authority on various subjects. I utilize various platforms, like Facebook, Google+ and LinkedIn, to connect with potential contacts and clients."  
*Ralph Meyer, president of RMMT Enterprises Delivery Services, [rmmt.ca](http://rmmt.ca)*



**"I am an avid believer** in delivering incredible value to your clients and giving them amazing information that they'll want to share with others. Deliver actionable, easy-to-implement content and your customers will invite their friends and customers into your circle. People want to be a member of an amazing community; creating raving fans is the easiest way to grow your customer base."  
*Natalie Blais, owner of Natalie Blais Consulting Inc., [natalieblais.com](http://natalieblais.com)*



**"By informing prospects and clients** of the recent Canada-Alberta Job Grant Program, where they can obtain a 66.7-per-cent training investment refund. Most do not know about it, and appreciate us taking the time to inform them."  
*Harvey Taphorn, leadership specialist at Crestcom, [crestcom.ca](http://crestcom.ca)*



**"We got really clear on** who our preferred customers actually are, then we designed and implemented strategies to solely target them. This has helped us streamline our business and serve our desired customers well."  
*Carmen Goss, president of Prominent Personnel, [prominent-personnel.ca](http://prominent-personnel.ca)*



**"Speaking has been the best** thing for me to increase my client base. From being a guest speaker at conferences and networking groups, to hosting my own money and empowerment workshops, getting in front of others is golden. I always encourage guests to bring a friend so the circle of people I can help is always expanding."  
*Paula Onysko, owner of Paula Onysko Coaching & Consulting, [paulaonysko.com](http://paulaonysko.com)*



**"I just launched a webinar** initiative to expand internationally and it has been fantastic ... I love face-to-face networking and meeting new people, but it's nothing compared to the power of webinars and Facebook groups. Just helping others by sharing information and steering them down the right path is rewarding enough on its own, but being able to market and expand at the same time is simply amazing. I believe that providing sound advice, helping whenever you can and being of service is the key to success, and using online tools to maximize your exposure is the key."  
*Trina Lo, creative curator at FreshInk Communications, [freshink.ca](http://freshink.ca)*



**"Cheque Print has taken a three-pronged approach** to growth; firstly, we offer fantastic customer service, thereby creating lots of referrals. Secondly, we invest in SEO, which has allowed us to consistently add 50 to 60 new customers each month for the past five years. Thirdly, we have expanded our product offering and production abilities to become a one-stop shop for all of our customers' printing needs. All three approaches have allowed us to have positive growth every year for the past 15 years."  
*John Kittell, founder of Cheque Print, [chequeprint.ca](http://chequeprint.ca)*



**"This answer sounds a bit** like common sense, but we focus on sales and marketing to increase our customer base. More specifically, social media, cold calling, door knocking, print advertising, search engine optimization, networking and referrals from happy customers."  
*Shawn Alain, president of Viral In Nature, [viralinnature.com](http://viralinnature.com)*



**"I have expanded my customer** base through my online and social media presence. Content marketing is a challenge to maintain for a small business. The trick to making content marketing work is to create valuable content assets for a focused niche. Higher value assets tend to get shared and promoted more online. With proper promotion of those assets, more customers become aware of you."  
*Nancy Seeger, CEO of Seeger Consulting Inc., [seegerconsultinginc.com](http://seegerconsultinginc.com)*



**"I have a mantra: Working** before networking. I let my work do the talking; most of my clients refer me to other entrepreneurs, and I just have to follow up with them and deliver. I still like going outside and meeting people, but before going out the door I ask myself if there is work to be done. If the answer is yes, I go back and get things done."  
*Luis Berumen, designer at Berumen Design, [berumendesign.com](http://berumendesign.com)*