You are in a CRAZY TEENAGER PHASE

In general terms, your entire sales and marketing operation right now might be in the **CRAZY TEENAGER** phase of development. Just like with any teenager, you have amazing, proud moments and huge headaches.

The **CRAZY TEENAGER phase is characterized by the challenge of managing growth.**

Just like teenagers, businesses can go crazy due to rapid growth. Crazy teenagers can make everyone crazy: this phase is defined by a confused workforce, a loss in motivation and innovation. You might notice people being always busy doing **“busy work” that seems to never end.**

To achieve efficiency - we can even say to survive - you will need to control your operation. **This phase is an awesome time for you to deconstruct your sales and marketing operations.**

The deconstruction of your customer interface is a must to balance rapid growth. This exercise will bring balance and clarity to your operation, increase employee morale, and establish a clear focus on how to drive the business and manage growth.

WHAT TO DO:

In this phase, many things seem to be an absolute priority. There are no recipes at this stage with what to focus on first but look at the following projects that might bring you value at this stage.

- Re-examine your Lead to Cash Process
- Optimize your Lead Management
- Create a yearly, fun Promotional Calendar

- Create a Performance Management System
- Establish a flexible Client Management System
- Define your Customer Profile
- Brand your entire Customer Experience
- Introduce Individual Coaching program for yourself and your people

I know that you have a long list project yourself, but let me suggest you the following three projects to focus on:

- **Examine your Lead to Cash Process**
- **Establish a flexible Client Management System**
- **Brand your entire Customer Experience**

Let me give you some a practical approach to them:

The Lead to Cash Process maps out the detailed itinerary of the customer journey throughout the buying process.

I know you are familiar with the word "lead but allow me to give you my definition: l**ead means to have the contact information of someone that COULD become your customer.**

If, for example, you are selling kids bikes, a great list of leads would be the email addresses of parents of kids between 5 and 9 years old. Or if you are selling security systems, leads could be the list of emails of every person that this year is building a house in the area that your business operates.

The **Lead to Cash process will help you see your entire sales and marketing operation, but mostly from a client perspective.** You will start with where your lead might hear from you, then what happens after the first contact until the sale happens.

To map out your Lead to Cash Process, take a bunch of colorful post-it notes and on a big wall to start tracing each step of your customer from the moment that it is just a lead to the moment they become a client. **The trick is to write down the responsible, the timeframe that they will finish that step and use different colors to make a difference between email, phone, automated or in person contact with the customer.**

I suggest you get **the help of an outsider** that already has done this before because they will ask the right questions and make sure you follow every single step. If you cannot find anyone to lead this process, do it yourself with 3-4 members of your team. Just jump into it, I promise it will be not only fun, but your best trick ever.

You will be amazed that in one single hour how many ideas you will have to optimize your entire sales process. I have done this at many companies and, trust me, **it is every company's secret weapon.**

Whether at Nestle, a small boutique IT company, mid-sized company dealing with laboratory equipment they all had **"AHA moments"** going through this process.

Do this periodically - I would suggest around 8 months - and always have a clear action plan and deadlines after the mapping for the changes that you want to see implemented.

The Client Management System is an analytical process that focuses on increasing the efficiency of the relationship with the existing clientele.

When it comes to Lead management, I always say **your best leads are your happy customers. This trick has its own paragraph.**

Sometimes we tend to forget that **the easiest way to sell is to sell to those clients that already gifted us with their trust** by experiencing our quality products and services. They will be more likely to return and buy from us and to recommend us - if they have had a positive experience.

Analyzing the client portfolio in a structured way will reveal many opportunities to grow our business. What you need to know is simple: have a big excel file and start categorizing your clients by them

- Types (active, lost, return to active)
- Profitability
- The basket they buy
- The frequency of their buy
- Volume per transaction
- Transaction type
- Cost
- Sales for a specific period
- Etc.

I am sure you will find information that will give your ideas to optimize.

I have just worked with a small accounting company, and they found more than 10 ways to grow their bottom line. How awesome is that? This is the power of a detailed client list.

I remember working for an oil company and realizing that 70% of the transactions at our gas stations are between 15 and 20 liters of gas. I could not understand the reason for this behavior, but I immediately jumped on the opportunity. I was wondering if I could just convince these people to buy 5 more liters of gas at each transaction that would have a real impact on our top and bottom line. The idea was to implement a series of promotions rewarding customers fueling their car with a minimum of 20 liters of gas. The results were spectacular, having a real impact on our profit with very small investment.

Trust me, **analyzing your transactions will reveal multiple opportunities to grow.** This exercise will help you refine your Client Profile; there build a more focused business and a more positive client experience.

Brand your entire Customer Experience means to make sure that every time the potential client or client interacts with you FEELS your brand.

The brand is a feeling. The brand is a guarantee of how you conduct business. But you already, at this stage, you know this. Still, I want to invite you to play an imaginary game.

Think of a car that you never had, but you would like to have. Now describe that car with two adjectives. I bet you that if one of these words is going to be **elegant**, then the furniture in the car salon, the clothes of the salespeople and pen on the salesperson desk will all be “elegant”. Customer service will solve your request in an “elegant” way, and your contract that you need to sign will feel somehow “elegant” too.

This company will **brand every interaction** not only with the logo of the brand but **with the feeling that the brand stands for.** The logo also will represent this feeling.

In the Crazy Teenager phase of your marketing and sales operation is a **good idea to map out your customer experience** and examine every single communication that he or she might encounter to be sure that your brand promise (those few adjectives or nouns) will create that feeling in EVERYTHING that your potential and actual clients can see, hear, touch and sense about your products, services and company in general.

Yes, I am also talking about the way you reject someone after a job interview. Yes, I am talking about the emails that you send after subscribing for a service, or how the messenger boot addresses someone.

You need to be honest and critical, because trust me, your leads and clients will be unforgiving about your communication.

There are two easy ways to map out the customer experience:

1. **Mapping the Lead to Cash Process -** I have talked about this favorite tool of mine above

2. **Look at EVERY SINGLE PIECE OF communication material** that you have - this might not be the entire picture of the customer experience, so try adding other experiences to the mix, but it is a good start.

Keep in mind that in a competitive market economy **the buying power is in the hands of the customers,** therefore your branding (your guarantee to build trust with your potential customers) is even more relevant.

The trick is to look at your company through the lenses of a customer or a potential customer. If this is too difficult, ask a stranger to come and look at your experience. Of course, it helps to work with a professional, but you can use your team. The idea is to be a stranger as you do it. 😊

I have seen many businesses that have a strong operational focus instead of a client focus. **To build a strong client focused organization here are three** easy things to keep in mind:

1. Each communication / activity should be **based on the customer's problems not in your comfort zone,** forget about your product, your "way of doing things" and think of a stranger interacting with your company. I know it sounds terrible, but neither you nor your product is important, your customer is.

2. If the client cannot get an answer to his/ her question in a relatively **short time (2 clicks, few minutes)** it is time to optimize. Sometimes we all get lost in our own labyrinth and talk about us, our products, our operations, our goals for too long – and nobody has the time for that. See it through the lenses of the client, how fast are you helping them solve a problem?

3. **Every little step** we take to optimize the customer experience is big enough to do. Often, we feel we have done so much, yet still nobody is thanking us. Shake this feeling off, every little thing you do matters. Take it step by step, keep the focus, even when you feel like stepping back. Client focus matters. Keep up the good work.

Start mapping and changing! Branding or rebranding your entire customer experience is never a bad thing to do but always needs to serve a clear goal: convert potential customers into paying clients!

WHAT TO EXPECT:

In the Crazy Teenager phase expect some resistance. I mean, there is a lot of resistance.

You will hear, “We already tried this!” “This will never work!” “This is not how to do things here!” “We are long enough in this business to know how things work!” etc.

Well, change is happening all around us, so **change is inevitable**. Rethinking processes, structures, indicators, and our way of communicating with the market is always a good thing to do.

In the case of the **Lead to Cash process**, you will be spotting some non-value-added steps that you might cut out or even reconsider some business value-added steps to optimize while they are not adding customer value. You might see parts of the process that bring real value to your customers, and you might focus on those parts in your next brainstorming session.

Analyzing your **client portfolio** with a new methodology could help you to redefine your customer profile, new promotional ideas, untapped partnerships to create more customer benefits, or even the optimization of your communication strategy.

Branding your customer experience will shed light on some practices that you might have overlooked.

Here is an approximate timeline to implement these three projects based on my experience:

Projects	**Set- up Time**	**Implementation and Evaluation**
Cash to Lead Process	Max 3 hours process mapping	2-3 months
Client Management System	1-2 weeks	1-2 months
Brand your entire Customer Experience	1 day	Depending on the resources, a fixed number of allocated hours per month

In my online course, at the Alternative School of Business, I dig deeper into each of these aspects of the sales and marketing operations with case studies, examples, and a more visual way to implement them with an easy step by step process.

Have fun changing,

Katalin