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Before Job Creation, Customer Cultivation; PLUS: Five Cultivation Channels

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This week Ben White at Slate's BizBox site pulled out what I thought was the most important point that the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) made in its commentary that accompanies its latest monthly Small Business Optimism Index.

NFIB argues that more than government incentives to spur lending by local banks, **what small businesses need right now is more customers to turn around poor sales**. This will result in the kind of robust job creation that will lead to optimal growth of our GDP over time.

While I tend to think government sometimes has a necessary role in business – curbing bonuses and executive pay of bailout companies seems like a no-brainer – entrepreneurs are right to ask what government can realistically do to bring more customers to their door.

Here the experience needed [Provigil online No prescription](#) to reach a good outcome lies with business leaders and their employees. To help equip these stakeholders, responsibility (and opportunity) also lies with workplace consultancies and content publishers. This week, for example, America's Best Companies did startups a service by providing them with four outlets from which to attract new customers.

I'd like to continue in this vein and share **some channels I see successful small businesses (our honorees and others) using to maintain sales in these tough times**:

1. Social networking sites – especially LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook.
2. The comment form on your website.
3. Ask and make it easy for customers on your (e)mailing list to refer others. Incentives such as discounts on their next order improve the participation rate.
4. Free product/service demo webinar or teleseminar. All registrants, even if they don't attend, are new leads. Tip: Use an incentive like a gift card to maximize attendance.
5. Workplace team building can produce additional channels you might not have considered. Engage employees in a weekly or monthly, all-hands forum to brainstorm on new ways to attract customers.

In addition to the tactics mentioned above, what do you do to find new customers?

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