



Tracing

Finding lost customers

Tracing a customer is not the same as tracing a friend

We all occasionally want to find old friends and past acquaintances. Usually for no other reason than we want to meet up again. However, in business the need to reconnect with past customers is often a commercial necessity.

There are many reasons a business may need to reconnect with a customer including,

- To collect overdue payments
- To secure the return of unpaid goods
- To repay over-payments
- To advise former customers of critical updates and support.

In most cases reconnecting means looking up the customer's contact details and making a phone call or sending an email or letter. However, if the customer has moved, or the details are incorrect, this is not possible.

This leaves the company in an awkward position if it needs to contact the customer to collect a debt or comply with a legal obligation.



The skill of tracing

This is where the skill of tracing comes in. Tracing people is a highly intuitive skill. You can have all the systems in the world but if you can't interpret the information they provide, it's all just noise. Tracing is like listening to a conversation in a crowd.

Good tracers, intuitively and instinctively, can pick out the little 'notes' in all that noise that let them zero in on the relevant information. Bit by bit they can piece those fragments together and eventually they find their man or woman. It isn't something everyone can do, it takes a certain type of person to be a great tracer.

The human touch

Tracing needs the human touch. It is ironic, given the electronic systems available today, when it seems every task (including driving a car and flying a plane) can be performed by a computer, that it still needs a person to find another person.

Business friendly tracing

Tracing a customer requires more care than tracing an old friend or past acquaintance. There are important priorities, trade-offs, and

sensitivities to consider.

It is not sufficient to find a directory entry or census record for the customer on Google or elsewhere. When it's a business issue at stake more is required. You must confirm that the found person is the correct person to deal with - either when collecting a debt or returning a payment. It is important to verify the found address and other contact details. Your reputation and customer good will are valuable assets and it is important to maintain these.

What you can do

If you are a business needing to reconnect with your past customers there are things that you can and should do to find the customer - a basic Google search for example.

But there are situations when it is better and more effective to focus on what you excel at - running your business - and give the task of finding the customer to someone who is good at it.

ACS offers a professional, regulated, and timely tracing service. Rapid, efficient, and compliant with CSA guidelines, ACS's Standard Trace service is provided on a No-Trace No-Fee basis.

Advanced Collection Systems

Established in 2000, ACS provides credit management and debt collection services to the utility and other sectors. Further information and resources including copies of this guide are available on its website.

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