Travis is an experienced sales person who works hard to develop and maintain rapport with his advertisers. “I believe it’s important to touch everyone in my client base on a regular basis,” he said. “Different situations call for different kinds of touches. If I need to advance a sale, it’s high-touch all the way. In other situations, a low-touch technique may work fine.”

This strategic approach makes a lot of sense. In descending order of impact, his top seven touches are (1) face-to-face, (2) phone call, (3) e-mail, (4) snail mail, (5) text messaging, (6) voice mail and (7) social media. Let’s take a closer look:

1. **Face-to-face meeting.** This ranks highest on the touch-scale. “For impact, you can’t beat an in-person conversation,” Travis said. “You’re in the same room talking about the same thing at the same time. This also gives you the opportunity to tour their business, see their products first hand, and meet employees.”

   Context is important. A meeting to gather information, present campaign ideas or analyze ad results is more meaningful than a get-acquainted visit.

2. **Voice-to-voice phone call.** A phone conversation doesn’t provide the opportunity to read body language – which is an important part of communication. But it is next best thing to a face-to-face meeting.

   “I’ve advanced a lot of sales in phone calls,” said Travis. “If you catch a client at a good time when they’re not in the middle of something else, they can be more relaxed than in a face-to-face appointment. The key is to be brief and get to the point quickly. Most business phone calls are short.”

3. **E-mail.** According to Travis, “E-mail is a great tool when you need to create a communications trail, follow up on meetings or send personalized information. But it ranks low on the touch scale when you send e-mail blasts or cookie cutter messages.”

4. **Snail mail.** The more of yourself you invest in snail mail, the more effective the message. Form letters and direct mail pieces are not as personal – and don’t rate as highly – as handwritten notes or personal letters.

   “It’s a shame that more sales people don’t send handwritten notes,” Travis said. “A handwritten note – especially a thank you note – is so rare that it is one of the most powerful communications tools in your arsenal.”

5. **Text.** In order for text messaging to work, there has to be an existing relationship with that particular client. Otherwise, it’s a wasted effort.

6. **Voice mail.** “If you’re returning a call or providing follow up information, voice mail is a good thing,” Travis explained, “because you’re responding to a specific request. But if you’re making cold calls, a voice mail message is likely to be deleted.”

7. **Social media.** This is at the bottom of Travis’ list. “If meaningful dialogue is the objective,” He asked, “how person-centered is a message that can be viewed by other people?”

It comes down to this: High touch equals better communication. And more sales.

*John Foust has conducted training programs for thousands of newspaper advertising professionals. Many ad departments are using his training videos to save time and get quick results from in-house training. E-mail for information: jfoust@mindspring.com.*