



The Power of Marketing

When times are tough in business, one of the first things to happen is the marketing budget gets cut. Reasons given for this include: We can't afford it, we have tight cashflow, we'll do it when things pick up, we're too busy, we don't have time...

In these economic times, don't cut back on marketing – do it better! Marketing is a powerful tool to help you increase new clients, generate sales, communicate who you are and the benefits of the products or services you sell, and how to contact you. In tough times, it is important to keep doing the key activity that will help you grow your business.

A critical factor to success is having a proactive, targeted and planned approach which is simple and practical. Spend time to develop your marketing plan, and keep it clear, concise and achievable. Identify: Where are we now? Where do we want to be? And what do we need to do to get there?

This activity should be developed all around your 'customer'. Customers are responsible for 100% of your profits and without customers you don't have a business. In order to be customer focused, make sure your marketing is not all about you but about what the customer wants and the benefits they get from doing business with you. Remember that customer perception is reality and what they believe about your company is what they talk about to their friends and family.

One of the most fundamental aspects in marketing is to be targeted in your approach – so aim for more of the customers you want. The Pareto Rule is widely quoted stating 80% of your business comes from 20% of your customers. Think of the increase in business if you could generate more sales with your most profitable customers.

Do you know who your top clients are? This is where every business needs to establish a sound customer database with contact details, frequency of contact and purchasing history including products and sales value. Don't forget, it is five times more expensive to generate a new customer than to sell more product to existing customers. They already know you, like you and trust you, so market to them first and allocate budget to upsell with special promotions and offers.

The way our customers buy has changed and so we must keep pace and change the way we market and sell our products and services. A vast number of companies are no longer looking for a one off transactional sale, but are wanting to build long term relationships, encourage repeat business and word of mouth referrals.

A key way to do this is with educational and relationship-based marketing. Focus on providing value to your customers; position yourself as the expert in your field and educate

Power Marketing Tips

- Think like a customer
- Spend money on existing clients
- Find ways to market your business every day
- Monitor and measure the response
- If it isn't working – change your approach
- If it is working – keep doing it
- Have simple strategies that get results, rather than complicated ones that never get done
- Focus on building relationships and educating your customers
- Marketing is a philosophy for the whole organisation – not just a department
- Stop 'Paralysis by Analysis' – make a decision and get started

them on your offering. Providing useful information helps customers make buying decisions and moves them from sceptics to informed buyers. Relationship-based marketing helps increase customer interaction, retention and long term engagement.

How can you market to your customers? Marketing uses many mediums, from direct mail to newspaper and radio advertising, brochures, flyers, press releases, website, and social media.

Before you look at how you market your business, it is important to look at the strategy behind it: What is the message,

how do you say it and who do you say it to? It is important to get the content established before the tactical 'doing' of the marketing. It is often tempting to promote a lot of products/services at the one time, especially if you have a small budget, but by focusing on one message at a time you avoid confusing customers.

Social media is very much part of our environment. We hear so much about Facebook and Twitter, Linked In and the need to have a presence to connect to all these new potential customers. Firstly though, establish where your customers are; what is their demographic, and psychographic? How do they currently find your business? Do they use social media, and if so, what medium? Do you have a strong website that is easily found on Google or other search engines? It is valuable to use both on-line and off-line marketing, but be mindful of how much time and money you invest and measure the response.

Marketing is not only about developing and communicating a campaign or specific promotion. It is about every part of your business and the way you and your staff present it everyday. Ensure your reception area is clean and tidy, that staff are dressed appropriately or in uniform, staff are warm and friendly with customers, that enquiries and e-mails are responded to promptly and efficiently, and your business cards and marketing material leave a great impression. You are your walking, talking brand so maximise and leverage every opportunity to promote your business.

Marketing involves everyone in your business – it is not a department but a philosophy. So start building your winning strategy to prioritise your customers and give them a powerful reason to do business with you. ■

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