

From Start-Up to Substantiality: How to Market to Win Big Profits!

By Steve W. Geiger

This article will tell you: 1. How to get there, and 2. How to stay there by using clever marketing techniques to your advantage.

If you have a small business, you already realize that there are literally hundreds of things you need to be aware of and tons of guidelines you need to follow everyday. Everything from what your company name will be to paying the appropriate taxes for your employees. This article will provide you with a timeline of simple marketing techniques, and will give you an overview of the tools that will help you market your small business to a profitable success, no matter what type of business it is.

When it comes to business, marketing can be the most important thing you do; no exaggeration! Without marketing, no one will know about you and you will not be in business for very long. This may sound elementary, a “no brainer,” but let’s define the elements of marketing to get a clearer understanding of what I mean. Marketing is a very complex procedure for a business. The term “marketing” can be broken into many parts, the main ones being advertising, promotion, public relations, and sales. Most large companies have two departments: a marketing department and a sales department. Regardless of how many departments you have, they are all interrelated with the ultimate goal being profit!

Before you even start to plan your marketing campaign, you had better realize that everything you do everyday revolves around your marketing efforts. From the way you answer the phone to the way your furniture is set up in your office, you are making a marketing statement – to the world! This is your image! This requires you to pay attention to every detail, to make sure that it is right for your particular business and your particular industry. As a good marketer, you want to make a strong statement and have a strong vision, to stand out from your competition. Start thinking in these terms from the start and you will be assured success.

The first step in our timeline to beginning your marketing campaign is to create a plan. When designing your plan, your advertising and public relations efforts will create the demand, and your sales efforts will complete the process. You can design a simple plan or a complex one. The most important thing is to put it down on paper. You need to know what direction you’re taking so that you can follow through. Here are the elements for a simple strategic marketing plan: (Seven short sentences; originally created by Jay Conrad Levinson, author of “Guerrilla Marketing.”)

1. The first sentence tells your goal and purpose for the plan.
2. The second tells your strategies; how you’ll achieve your goals (focusing on your features and benefits).
3. The third tells your target market, or markets.
4. The fourth, and longest sentence, tells the type of marketing, advertising and public relations tactics you’ll employ.
5. The fifth tells your niche; what sets you apart from your competition.
6. The sixth tells your identity or theme.
7. The final sentence tells your budget, expressed as a percentage of your projected gross revenues.

Once you complete your plan, be sure to pay special attention to item six. Your identity or image is what the world will see. It will be your “brand name”. Speaking of brand names, the name you choose for your business and/or products is critical for your image. It is important that it is memorable. A strong brand name that people will remember will bring attention to your business. Be sure to trademark the name and any logos or slogans that are created for it. You want to be sure that this wonderful name stays yours!

Next you need to use marketing to solidify your company infrastructure. Your company vision and values should be expressed in a public mission statement. Include this statement in your marketing materials and hang a sign with the mission statement on your office wall. Your employees should understand this statement and be able to follow its principles on a day to day basis. Make a slogan for your business – a few words or a sentence that describes exactly what you do. You may want use some of the terminology derived from your mission statement. Use it on all of your marketing materials. Next, prepare an “elevator pitch”. Similar to a slogan, you need to be able to explain what your business does in a few words or few sentences – practice it many times to get it down so you can tell whoever you meet.

Now that you have your plans and basic infrastructure in place, it is time to execute! Use your budget to develop your image: logo, business cards, letterhead and such. Start using this budget to promote yourself and your business. Yes, I said yourself! If you are a small business you need to promote yourself along with your business. From a PR (Public Relations) standpoint you are your best advocate, and your background and story should be associated with the business.

Making the right choices is critical to the success of your campaign. Familiarize yourself with all of the options and study them carefully. Here are a few examples of media types, promotional ideas, and PR tactics:

Advertising Media types – Print: newspapers, magazines, flyers, brochures, direct mail, postcards; Radio; Television.

Promotion ideas – co-op advertising, fundraiser events, sales, awards, contests.

PR tactics – press releases, feature stories, newsletters, seminars, editorials, tradeshow.

As you execute your campaign, you need to be sure you are credible to your consumer. Pick and do the things that bring you this credibility and be honest about it. It is very important to follow this to get good PR. Word of mouth advertising is probably the strongest form of advertising there is. Anything that is good about what you do will be advocated by a customer to one or a few other people. Everything that you do bad will be told to between 5 to 25 people – definitely not what you’re aiming for. This is why your image, and that first impression is so important. The impression that a customer takes away from his/her experience with you will dictate whether or not they will return, directly affecting your bottom line.

Your final step to successful marketing is a good sales strategy. For this, you need to decide what channels you will use. Will it be OEM’s (Original Equipment Manufacturers) to sell your products to, that are manufactured into or sold with theirs, VAR’s (Value Added Resellers) or distributors, which are established sales agencies that usually get a commission or percentage from you, other industry partners, or your own direct sales? Will you send your marketing materials out, make phone calls, make appointments, or have someone do this for you? Outline your tactics for your sales program, make telephone scripts for your employees to answer the phone or call on clients. Be aware that many people are not fond of phone solicitations, so be

creative, try new things and find what works best for you. You will also need to research what your competition is doing and compare it to help find what is best for your business. Speaking of competition, you should be aware of what they are up to. Find what the “buzz” is about the industry and even ask your competitors on a friendly basis. Usually there is plenty of business to go around for everyone and you don’t want or need to be sneaky about things and make enemies.

Design your ads the way the pros do... from top to bottom: a strong headline with a “hook” to grab attention, a focal point such as a picture or sharp graphic, subheads, body copy, and your contact information, logo and slogan at to bottom. Be sure to remember not to directly mention your competitors in any of your advertising unless you’re financially prepared to fight a legal war.

Now, to proliferate your results be sure to track your campaign closely. For example, if you send out direct mail pieces, code them with a special phone number extension to ask for or a coupon to bring into your store. But, most important, ask how your customers found out about you! That is the best tracking you can do. Then you can reproduce your results by continuing to do the things that bring you the most business.

In regard to Award Winning vs. Practical Advertising, my opinion is that what ever gets you business and produces profit is truly what wins the award in my book. Producing the prettiest brochure or flashiest logo is not always that necessary. It may help your image, but will also cost you a lot of money. Do what you can afford and do it to get the results – your true award, and reward for that matter!

In conclusion, if the one thing you take away from this article is that you understand your “image means everything,” then I have been successful in helping you. Use this article as your guide and review it as often as you need. Remember to write down your plans and goals and stay on track. With a good plan and strategy to execute it you will be on your way to win big profits.

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