

## Small Business Marketing Tips

### How to make your promotional dollars work harder

As a long-time marketing consultant, and a small business owner myself, I know that marketing can seem like a necessary evil which comes with a high price tag, and no guarantees.

But it doesn't have to be that way! Use your marketing dollars wisely and they will work harder, and go further, than you ever imagined.

#### Read on, and find out how to stretch those dollars:

- ✚ **1. Forget About Advertising.** Low-cost, or no-cost ways to build your business without traditional advertising.
- ✚ **2. Target Your Message.** How to make sure that you are only paying to reach real prospects.
- ✚ **3. Look Professional.** Making the most of that all-important first impression.
- ✚ **4. Understanding Your Creative Approach.** In this section, covering layout, headlines and copy, you will learn how to make your marketing materials irresistible and persuasive.

Read on to find out what all that really means...

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# Words By Wendy

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## 1. Forget about Advertising

OK, I'm a marketing consultant, so of course I wouldn't really advocate that. I really mean that you should rethink your definition of advertising and engage in some 'below-the-line' business building activities which will very cost-effectively help you reach new clients:

- Your Marketing Kit. Some of the materials that are a must include business cards and a website. Depending on your marketing activities, you may also want to invest in some support pieces such as brochures, mailing postcards or business stationery.
- Your brand. It is vital that all these pieces are designed and produced to portray, consistently, the image you wish your clients and prospects to develop of your company. This is your brand, and it is probably your most important marketing piece.
- Networking. A wonderful, low cost way to meet prospects and develop a referral network.
- Write Articles. Providing an exposure which increases awareness of your company and establishes you as an expert in your field.
- Press Releases. At little or no cost, this gives you the opportunity to obtain impartial, and therefore extremely credible, exposure.
- Give Out Your Card.
- Follow Up. Stay in touch, and keep your name in front of people you meet.

And last, but definitely not least:

- Ask for a Referral! Always ask people if they know someone who might be interested in your product or service. They might just think of someone who needs exactly what you have to offer. Referrals from your clients, and testimonials, come with huge credibility and have great potential for building your business.

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## 2. Target your Message

This may sound obvious, but one of the best ways to throw money away is to advertise in mass media, in the hope of reaching a few prospects.

Before considering any marketing activity make sure you have given some serious thought to the following basic information:

- Who is your prospect, and where you are likely to find them?
- How many new clients do you need?
- How much is any new client likely to spend, and how much are they worth to you?

This will enable you to analyze different media in terms of the cost per new client, and the value that a new client has to you.

A client who will spend a considerable amount over time is obviously worth more to you than a one-time client purchasing a minor product or service. The cost of acquiring the first kind of client should clearly be higher than the cost of acquiring the second. So, always think 'return on investment' when considering any marketing activities.

Remember, to acquire a lot of 'small spenders', it may be worth pepper-spraying a message in the mass media. If, on the other hand, you only require one good client, it would be more worthwhile to send a highly informative and compelling mailing, with appropriate follow-up, to a few carefully targeted prospects.

## 3. Look Professional

Just as you wouldn't turn up to a business meeting in your gardening clothes, it is vital that your company is represented at all times by the most professional materials possible.

Invest in some professionally printed brochures and cards. In this age of desk-top publishing you can do this in your own office, but the cost of printing at a small print-shop or at one of the larger office supply stores will be worth it in terms of the impression you will create.

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## **4. Understand the Power of the Creative Approach**

Your promotional materials may be professionally produced, but the graphics and copy are what take you beyond the initial impression, and closer to that sale.

The following guidelines are the results of years of research and testing. They're obviously rather oversimplified here, but believe me, they all make a difference to the response you can expect. Analyze your current materials to see how many of these rules they follow:

### 1) Layout

- People will scan your printed materials, or your web pages, in the following order
  - (i) picture
  - (ii) headline
  - (iii) copy

Present it in that order, and you make it more comfortable for your prospect to take it all in. In the end you will increase the chance of your message being read.

- Avoid very busy layouts which detract from the copy, and confuse the eye. Also, try to avoid having white or pale type on a dark background. It may look great, but it is hard to read and will turn off some of your prospects.
- More people read photo captions than the body copy. If a caption would add in any way to the selling message, then include one.

### 2) Headline

- A headline in upper and lower case, rather than all capitals, is easier to read.
- Ending your headline with a period is an invitation to the prospect to stop reading.
- Avoid overly long headlines – about eight words should be the maximum.

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## 3) Copy

This is obviously a subject very dear to my heart, but I cannot stress enough the importance of well-written, compelling copy that leads your prospect through the process of education and conviction to your desired course of action.

Whether you are writing your own copy, or assessing some-one else's, try to ensure that your copy always follows as many of these rules as possible. It will make a difference!

- Long copy sells. It has been proven time and time again that, as long as your copy is interesting and relevant to the reader, they will read as much as you can tell them. The more information you give, the more compelling your argument will be. Of course, it is also important that your long copy is concise, to-the-point and clear, but do not be afraid to tell the whole story.
- Lead with real benefits. Your prospect does not really want to know about your company or product – they want to know what is in it for them!
- Use a serif type-face for print materials, and san serif typeface for web materials. Serifs are those little tails on the ends of each letter, for instance on this particular typeface.
- Break up long text with sub-heads, bolding and italics, indented paragraphs, bullet points etc. Those visual devices make long copy easier to assess for relevance, and also to scan. If your prospect can pick out sections that are of particular interest they are more likely to attend to your full message.
- Keep sentences and paragraphs fairly short.
- Use a 12-point typeface. It is by far the most comfortable size to read.
- When writing a sales letter, always include a P.S., and never end a page at the end of a sentence or paragraph. If the sentence carries onto the next page, then so will your reader.

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## Conclusion

Well, I hope you have enjoyed this very short tutorial, and learned something new. As you can see, marketing a small business doesn't have to be prohibitively costly, but it is important that every dollar counts!

Best wishes,

**Wendy Zak**

**Copywriter and Direct Marketing Specialist**

**P.S.** If you want a copywriter who can prepare materials that achieve positive results, give me a call on **279-3606**. I specialize in direct response pieces such as brochures, newsletters, web-sites and sales letters. I also offer ghost-writing of articles.

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